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# CLEVERLY WON.

A Romance of the Grand National.

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## CHAPTER I.

### TATTERTON SCRUBS.

WHEN Joe Bourton first took Tatterton Scrubs, it was prophesied that he would never stay there, but then those who knew him would tell you that Joe Bourton never did stay anywhere long. A shrewd, hard-headed, practical farmer, it was odd that he should have been so much of a rolling-stone, but it was nevertheless true that he never did hold a farm above a few years. It wasn't that he was impecunious; he was a fairly substantial man, who generally got on with his landlords and neighbours, but he was restless, always seeking to better himself, and ever fancying he saw golden opportunities elsewhere, and forgetting that the farm he then held had looked to him a golden opportunity only three years ago. The proverb about the rolling-stone is tolerably true, and though Joe Bourton was fairly clever in getting out of his holdings, and not being as a rule pressed for money was able to bide his time, still he undoubtedly did not make money by these perpetual changes. But of all his numerous

ventures, none had turned out so disastrously as the taking of Tatterton Scrubs, a farm of between three and four hundred acres, on the edge of that marsh country between Peterborough and Huntingdon.

It was in the middle of one of those long summers when on the light lands of Lincolnshire farmers have neither grass, corn, nor water, but when in the fen country, on the contrary, they are growing six quarters of wheat to the acre, and seem to be unable to get to the end of their grass. Bourton thought he had never seen a farm with finer capabilities. "What crops," he said, "and what splendid land for horse breeding!" This latter had always been a hobby of Bourton's. On every farm he had held he had always raised some three or four half-bred colts, and had usually found it by no means an unprofitable speculation. He put them to light work on the farm, and when they came to about four years old, disposed of them as hunters, carriage horses, or whatever they seemed to have the makings of; but he had had for a long time a hankering to go in for horse-breeding on a rather more extensive scale, and the proximity of this farm to Newmarket determined him upon buying three or four mares as soon as he should be settled in it.

"Yes, I know all its good points," replied one of his cronies with whom he was talking the matter over, "but you've seen Tatterton Scrubs at its very best. A summer like this was just made for it. Wait till you have a wet one. Did you ever see that part of the country when the waters were out? Do you know what it is not to see your farm for

three months, and go home to your house in a boat? Do you know what it is to skate over your spring wheat, and watch how it is getting on beneath the ice?"

However, Joe Bourton looked upon the best part of all this as exaggeration; he thought his friends were poking fun at him; he was rather used to it; his neighbours always resented his leaving their part of the world whenever his errant spirit moved him to once more dispose of all his goods and chattels and migrate elsewhere. But in this instance the prophets proved only too near the mark. After four years he came to the conclusion that Tatterton Scrubs was beating him. The first season he did very fairly, as well as an incoming tenant could possibly expect to do. But the three last had been of the sort that his ill-omened friend had expatiated on; his corn had mildewed, the grass had grown so coarse and rank that the stock didn't seem to thrive upon it. All the diseases incidental to continuous wet weather fell upon both his sheep and cattle, and worse than all, the horse-breeding had turned out disastrously; disastrously, more especially from this one reason, that three or four thorough-breds that he had reared had attracted but little attention in "the sale ring," and no buyer had bid more than half the money at which Bourton valued them. In an evil moment he determined to send them to a training stable at Newmarket and run them himself, and so far the buyers had proved very much more correct in their estimate of Mr. Bourton's yearlings than that gentleman himself. Three or four horses in a training-stable that do

nothing toward earning their keep are most expensive luxuries, and when Joe Bourton got his trainer's account the second bad year that he was domiciled at the Scrubs, he winced, and when the succeeding year showed a similar result, he vowed he would have no more of it. The brood-mares and the young ones at Newmarket were all advertised for sale at the Houghton meeting, and on the following Lady Day it was settled that they should abandon the Scrubs and migrate into Hampshire. Mrs. Bourton, a hypochondriacal, querulous woman, declared that the damp got into her bones, and though they had never had to seek their house in a boat, yet the waters had been out in a way that might justify anyone in complaining of rheumatism.

“No sign of your father yet, Kitty. He ought to be home by now, and a bitter cold day he must have had of it. The sale, too, I know has gone badly; we've never had any luck since we came to Tatterton Scrubs, and I'm sure I've never known what it is to have a day's health.”

“Well, never mind, mother, we are going into quite a different country at Lady Day, and we must hope that will suit you better.”

As far as that was concerned, Kitty honestly had not much hope. The country that would suit Mrs. Bourton had never yet been discovered, and it is possible that his wife's whims contributed somewhat to Joe Bourton's roving propensities. Kitty Bourton was a bright sunshiny girl, usually well contented with her lot, wherever it might fall; but she was quite in accord with her mother upon this occasion, and was unfeignedly glad that they were leaving

the Scrubs. It was a comfortable house enough, but it was a dreary, desolate country, and moreover, the farm was a very isolated one; they had no near neighbours, and Kitty, as was very natural at her age, liked mixing with her fellows, and could appreciate a dance or frolic as well as anyone. The girl found the Scrubs decidedly dull, and was quite her mother's mind in wishing to leave it. Moreover, Kitty had a vague idea that the sooner her father got away from the neighbourhood of Newmarket, the better. She was fond of horses, fond of riding, but she understood little about this racing business. She thought Huntingdon races great fun when the misbehaviour of the river allowed them to be held. She knew that a great deal of money was habitually lost there, but would have barely comprehended had she been told that it was "the deadliest galloping course in England," and perhaps more fatal to favourites than any other that could be named. She knew it as a very pleasant outing, as a very enjoyable picnic, and when she and her friends made up little sweepstakes on each race, she was usually rather lucky, and had constantly brought home a pound or thirty shillings spoil as an end to a most delightful day. As for young squire Colaton, he was a perfect victim to her, whether she took the odds against the evens, the evens against the odds, the two favourites against the field, or the field against the two favourites: it seemed all one, the young squire never could win a bet from Kitty Bourton, and she held his racing knowledge exceeding cheap in consequence. Folks however would laugh when she hinted this, and reply that young men did not

care to win from young ladies on these occasions, and then they would wink to each other and whisper that the squire was "woundy sweet" on Kitty Bourton, that Mr. Colaton knew his way about and could ride as straight to hounds as most men, that he had a nice place, a keen eye for a pretty girl, and it was getting time he married and settled down.

Tatterton was a small parish. It consisted, as far as gentry went, solely of the squire and the parson; and the squire, the said Richard Colaton alluded to, was nothing more than the biggest farmer in the parish, differing indeed from his co-mates, inasmuch as the eight hundred acres he farmed was every acre of it his own property. Moreover, his father was supposed at some remote period to have held a commission in the army, while Dick Colaton himself was a lieutenant in the Militia. A good-natured, cheery young fellow, fond of all sorts of sport, and whose great ambition it was to win one of the local steeplechases on a horse of his own. And in regard to this, he had been so far unsuccessful. He himself said that he never could get hold of anything good enough, that, clever as his horses might be as hunters, they lacked speed for steeplechasing. His detractors, on the other hand, said that Dick Colaton would have to learn to ride before he could hope to be hailed a winner of one of the local events. Dick Colaton himself only laughed and said that he should pick up a galloper some day, and would then take all the small change out of their pockets.

"In the meantime," he said, "I see the race



better than you do from the Grand Stand. I get my fun for my money; it's like being with the hounds, instead of bumping along the roads. My day will come, never fear."

"Surely that's the whitechapel at last," exclaimed Mrs. Bourton, "the wheels went round to the stable yard, didn't they?"

"Yes; that's father, I'll be bound," ejaculated Kitty, "and glad he'll be of something to eat, I should think."

And then the girl bustled out of the parlour and ran through the offices to give some household instructions bearing on the quick production of a comfortable meal for the traveller.

"Well, father," exclaimed Kitty, as Joe Bourton entered the kitchen from the stable-yard. "I'm sure you must be perished. Come into the parlour, we've a good fire there, and tell us all about the sale, and what you did, while they are getting your supper ready."

"Very little good, lass," he replied, "and I shall be right glad of something to eat." And with that he followed his daughter into the parlour, and throwing off his wraps planted himself with his back to the fire.

"You've had a bad sale, Joe, I know it without your telling me. We've never had any luck since we came to Tatterton Scrubs."

"Never mind, Mary, if we haven't done any good here, indeed there's no denying I've lost a good bit of money, but we're not broke, and we are going to leave it. Tom Craddock was right about the place after all; there's a mort of money to be made off

the farm in a good year, no doubt, but it's chancy land. 'Wait till you see it when the waters are out,' those were Craddock's words, but hang me if they ever seem to be anything else," he concluded with a jolly laugh.

Joe Bourton, in spite of his restless disposition, was a hard-working, energetic man, one not easily daunted, not the man to sit down and think he was ruined just because he had embarked in an unprofitable business when he took the Scrubs. No, he had lost a bit of money over it, and he had lost still more over the rearing and running of thoroughbred stock, and come to the conclusion that the sooner he had done with both the Scrubs and the horses the better.

"Well, Joe, the horses are gone, at all events; it was better they should go, though I fear they have fetched bad prices."

"You're quite right, old lady, they did fetch bad prices, but it was best they should go, and they're gone, with one exception. Teetotum is coming back to us. I was only bid twenty pounds for her, and I said I'd shoot her sooner than she should go for that."

"I'm glad Teetotum is coming back to us, father. She was the gentlest, quietest creature possible."

"Yes, and they tell me that training hasn't spoilt her temper an atom, but she's not a bit of use for racing; she was out once, as a two-year-old, and she has run five times this year, and she has never won a race yet. She'll maybe make a neat hack when she gets another year or two on her. She'll carry you nicely, Kitty, at all events."

"And the others are gone, you say, Joe?"

"Yes, and it's no fault of mine that Teetotum didn't go too. I offered her to Mr. Colaton for fifty pounds, pointed out to him that she had the makings of a nice hunter, but he only laughed and said:

"How do you know she will jump, Bourton?"

"He might well ask that," said Kitty, laughing.

"It is rather guess work," rejoined her father, joining in her merriment, "but I called to mind that picture in *Punch*, and told him that a horse must be born for something or other, and that it was quite evident she wasn't born for racing."

"And what did he say to that, father?" asked Kitty.

"Oh! he laughed too, and said it didn't quite follow that she was meant for a hunter either, but that there was one thing quite clear, her owner would have to keep her for some time yet before it became clear what she was destined for."

"He's quite right," replied Mrs. Bourton, "and I don't see what you and Kitty have got to be so much amused about. You'd better have taken twenty pounds for her, and have done with it, than have the cost of keeping her all this winter."

"Never mind, missis, we'll say it's a whim of mine. I've an idea that I shall get that fifty pounds and the price of her winter's keep to the back of it for Teetotum yet. I have got rid of a training bill, and that's the main thing. As for the filly, it'll only be the cost of a few pounds to run her

in the straw yard during the winter. However, here comes supper, and if ever I was ready for it in my life it's now. Newmarket Heath may make you shiver, but, by gum! it gives you an appetite."

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## CHAPTER II.

### TEETOTUM.

CLOSE upon a year had elapsed since the opening of our story, and no greater contrast can be imagined than that lonely domicile in the marsh districts of the eastern counties, and the bonny farmhouse on the breezy Hampshire uplands. Lowood Farm is as different from Tatterton Scrubs as that chill, gloomy October day is to the bright September morning that shines gaily down upon Kitty Bourton as she stands at the front gate leading up to the house, petting and caressing Teetotum.

"You may be no good, my dear, for racing," she murmurs, as she takes some sugar from the pocket of her riding habit, "but you're just about as pleasant a hack as a girl ever got on for a morning canter. The way you stride across the downs is simply perfection. You are smooth and easy as a mail train. You may not be quick enough for Newmarket, but I think they would find us hard to catch in these parts, wouldn't they?" and as she finished, Kitty rubbed her favourite's nose and kissed her forehead.

A slight noise behind her made Kitty Bourton turn rather abruptly, only to behold a good-looking

young fellow, on a neat-looking pony, who, raising his hat, laughingly exclaimed :

“Sorry to interrupt such a sentimental interview, Miss Bourton, but I have ridden over unasked to invite myself to breakfast. Your pet, I am sure, is worth all the caresses you bestow upon her. She’s a sweet-looking mare, but with a deal more substance than I should have thought was necessary for you.”

“Then why didn’t you buy her,” responded Kitty, smiling; “but never mind that. Come in, father will be delighted to see you, Mr. Colaton. What on earth has brought you down into our country? Ah! here you are at last, Thomas. Take the horses round. This gentleman has come to breakfast, and his pony must be put up until he is ready for it,” and then, gathering up her habit, Kitty led the way into the house.

“How do you like your new home?” enquired Dick Colaton, as they walked through the garden. I’m bound to stand up for Tatterton because I live there; but I’ll admit Lowood is a good deal brighter place than the Scrubs. I am fond all the same of the long vistas, and quaint shadows that come across our interminable flats in these long autumn days. You mustn’t abuse the old place, Miss Bourton. Your father was peculiarly unlucky during his tenancy of the Scrubs. We have had a grand season this year and the new-comer a great time in consequence. It’s a pity almost Mr. Bourton didn’t hang on to the Scrubs for another year.”

“No, Mr. Colaton; I think that horse-breeding

near Newmarket will never pay. We like our new home, and if we can't grow the corn that you do down there, we do better with our sheep. Stock does well in this country. What did you think of the mare I have been riding?"

"An uncommon good-looking one," returned Colaton. "And if her manners are only equal to her appearance she should be worth a good bit of money."

"Ah!" rejoined Kitty, with a saucy laugh, "you didn't think so a year ago or you'd have given father the fifty pounds he asked you for her; but, here he is, and right glad I am sure to see you." And, as she spoke, the girl threw open the parlour door, where her mother was busy with the teacups, and Joe Bourton engaged in the investigation of a large dish of ham and eggs.

"Mr. Colaton! by all that's wonderful!" exclaimed the farmer, as he sprang to his feet, "What on earth, squire, has brought you to our part of the world? However, be it what it might, I'm main glad to see you. Sit down and have some breakfast with us and tell us all about the old place and the old country. I shall enjoy a crack over old times, although Tatterton Scrubs proved a sore bargain to me."

"Yes, you were unlucky, you had it at a bad time. And how do you like Lowood, Mrs. Bourton?"

"The place seems to agree with me, and that's something, Mr. Colaton; but I don't know, I'm thinking it'll be terribly bleak across these Downs when we get to winter."

"Nothing to the country you've left. I know these parts well; I've some cousins with whom I'm now staying who live only six or seven miles from here. It may be cold, but it is not that raw damp cold that we get at Tatterton."

"Ah! my bones got that chill at the Scrubs," replied Mrs. Bourton, "that I doubt even the Indies would never grill it out of me now."

Mrs. Bourton, good woman, was much given to descant on her ailments, and her friends entertained a wholesome dread of her conversation when it turned upon this topic.

"What was it you said to me about your horse, Kitty?" interposed young Colaton, with a view to adroitly changing the subject.

He had called her Kitty when she first came to the Scrubs, a slip of a girl of fifteen, and though he had tried to tutor himself latterly into the more conventional Miss Bourton his tongue was wont at times to betray him.

"What, the filly she was riding this morning?" exclaimed the farmer. "Why that's the one I wanted you to take last Houghton meeting, and she is honestly worth all the money for a lady's hack now."

"Don't want a horse of that description in my stables at present," rejoined Dick Colaton laughing.

"Nothing like being in time, nothing like being in time," replied Joe Bourton. "You'll be getting married before long, and then think what a comfort it will be to know you've a ladies' horse in the stable, instead of scouring the country to pick up something for your wife to ride."

"You're bent upon luring me to my undoing, Mr. Bourton," retorted Dick. "I wouldn't buy Teetotum before, on the chance of her making a hunter, and now you want me to buy her on the chance of my getting married. I can't afford to indulge in such wild speculations. Joking apart, I didn't recognise the mare, she has not only filled out a good bit during the last year, but when I saw her at Newmarket she was in training and rather fine drawn to boot; she looks as big again now. Have you ever tried her at jumping?"

"I think not. Have you, Kitty?"

"No, father," replied the girl, "unless you call going over an occasional gap jumping."

"It's something," replied Dick Colaton, meditatively. "Does she make any fuss about them?"

"No," rejoined Kitty laughing, "further than, like most young horses, she jumps most unnecessarily high over them."

"It's not bad practice for them," said Bourton. "It gives 'em confidence."

"I'm not very particular," replied Colaton, "but I like them a little more made than that. I'm afraid we can't deal this time; besides, Miss Kitty would never forgive me if I bought her favourite."

"She is too good for you, Mr. Colaton; when I do have to part with Teetotum I hope she will go into the hands of someone who can appreciate her merits."

"As yet undeveloped," remarked Colaton.

"Scoffer!" replied the girl, laughing, "the day will come when you'll gnash your teeth because



you missed the chance father offered you last year."

"Now, Mr. Colaton, if you won't have another cup of tea, we'll just have a look round the place and you shall tell me what you think of Lowood."

Joe Bourton showed his guest round the well-ordered homestead with great pride, took him to see two or three beasts that were already up and fattening for Smithfield Show, all of which were duly punched, "handled," and commented on by Dick Colaton. As they neared the stables Kitty joined them, and said :

"Now, Mr. Colaton, you don't deserve it, but I want you to have one good look at my favourite, and I think you'll admit she has grown into a very handsome mare. No good, I daresay, for hunting or racing, but a very pleasant riding-horse for all that," and as she spoke the girl opened the door of the box and Teetotum turned her brown head to take stock of the intruders. Recognising her mistress, she at once came towards her to look after the accustomed dainty which Kitty was in the habit of bestowing upon her on such occasions, and for the first time Dick Colaton really recognised what a good-looking mare she was.

"How is she bred?" he asked curtly.

"By Muscovite, out of Spinster," replied Bourton.

"Rare staying blood," remarked Colaton, and suddenly the thought flashed across his brain that perhaps, after all, a great mistake had been made with this mare.

It was quite possible that she was by no means so bad as her performances would leave one to

believe; he knew that they did at times, in the cleverest training stables, fall into grievous error about their charges, persistently running them over courses which did not suit them. Horses have their distances, and one that is a good performer over six furlongs is perfectly useless over two miles, and *vice versa*. As far as his memory served him, Teetotum had been invariably run over short courses. Once more he looked her over, and ran his hand down her legs.

There could be no doubt about them; they were broad, flat, free from blemish, and looked like standing any amount of galloping. The short back and grand quarters looked like making nothing of weight. Could she but learn to jump, there was possibly the makings of a great cross-country horse in her. By her breeding she was gifted with great endurance, and though she had proved too slow for the short distances she had run on the flat, it was more than possible that over a greater scope of ground she would be found a very much superior animal. Dick Colaton was no fool, and the training of the horse-dealing counties from which he sprang had taught him not to eulogise what you may possibly want to buy. It has been avowed that in the matter of horses, even a bishop could hardly be expected to keep to strict veracity when it came to dealing. Dick had no idea of that just at present, but it struck him that in another year Teetotum might develop into the sort of mare that he should be glad to pick up at anything like reasonable money.

True, Ashton Smith's country, in which Lowood

stood, was a notoriously galloping one. It had been said, over and over again, that as long as it was fast enough anything would do to ride with the Squire of Tedworth's beauties. They could go, but, as the joke went, there wasn't a ditch in the country, and a man on a horse that could jump a sheep hurdle might "set the field."

"Go!" exclaimed one enthusiast; "I should rather think they can. Pigeons are a joke to them on a good scenting-day, when they meet on the Danebury side, and there are a lot of those fellows riding horses good enough to about run fourth for the Derby. It's a case of regular racing over the downs. If you have not a regular quick one under you, you may jog home to lunch at once."

All this Dick Colaton was thoroughly aware of. He knew the country well, and it was perfectly clear to him that the hunter who might be a flyer over the Hampshire Downs would probably come to infinite grief in the first few minutes in the Midlands.

"She's a very good-looking mare," he said at length, "a far better-looking one than I ever yet gave her credit for being. Miss Kitty, I apologise for never yet having properly appreciated your favourite. Don't think I am suggesting you should send her back to Newmarket, Mr. Bourton, but I can't help thinking that it's possible they made a muddle of her there. When you're racing in a small way, and put your two or three horses into a big stable, these trainers humbug you so. Quite possible Mallow didn't fancy Teetotum, and put her to lead gallops or something of that sort

Without thinking she's good enough to win the Oaks, I can't help fancying there's a good race in her whenever you've learnt where to place her."

"I'll leave that discovery for somebody else," rejoined Joe Bourton. "I've lost quite enough money 'placing her' as it is. Kitty will ride her till I get a decent bid for her, and then her buyer can, of course, try any experiment he likes."

"I'm sure you're right, Mr. Colaton," exclaimed Kitty; "they never understood her at Newmarket. Mallow took no pains at all with her. It's just what you say; she was sacrificed for other horses he had more fancy for. Why, she goes like the wind with me across the Downs."

"Yes," chuckled her father, "it's astonishing the pace they go when they're galloping alone. It's only when they're outpaced we understand they're not so quick as we want them to be."

"Well," said Dick Colaton, as they left the box, "I hope, Kitty, you'll have many a good gallop on Teetotum before the winter is over. As for you, Mr. Bourton, you seem to have lit upon your legs and got hold of a charming farm in one of the pleasantest parts of Hampshire. Right good order, it looks in, too, as far as I can see. You must have had a good man before you; and now if you will let me, I'll order my pony and canter back to my cousins'."

Colaton's hack was soon brought round, and without re-entering the house, he shook hands with his host and Kitty, and swung himself into the saddle.

"When shall we see you again?" remarked Joe Bourton.

"Oh! I'm sure to be down about Christmas time. My cousins are old-fashioned people, who always keep up all the festivities of that season. They have always something going on then."

"Well, mind you come and see us," replied Joe Bourton. "Only let us know you're in the country, and there's a bed and a hearty welcome at Lowood for you. It'll be odd, too, if we can't knock up some sort of fun for you."

"Good-bye; say good-bye to Mrs. Bourton for me," and lifting his hat to Kitty, Dick Colaton gathered up his reins, gave the old pony a friendly kick in the ribs, and took his departure.

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## CHAPTER III.

### "A QUICK THING."

ONE fine morning towards the end of November, Kitty Bourton made her appearance in the breakfast-room attired in hat and habit.

"What, you hold to your purpose, lass," said her father, "and a right gay morning you've got for your fun."

"Yes, father," replied the girl, "I'm bent upon showing Teetotum the hounds this morning. I don't intend to do any more than see them throw off. She is not sufficiently educated to attempt following them."

"You're sure to find a fox in Claxby Wood, and for the matter of that, it's a very easy country lying all round it. But you're quite right, Kitty; don't attempt to ride to them. It's running a risk of an

awkward fall in the first place, and secondly, you might possibly ruin the mare. She would be more frightened by a crumpler than you would, I'll be bound."

"Yes, she has plenty of courage, but she's rather a nervous creature, for all that, and whether she will ever take kindly to jumping, I've my doubts about, and," she concluded, laughing, "I don't think I will try and satisfy myself to-day."

A crack meet on the edge of the Down-country, Claxby Wood, was always largely attended. It was a sure find, and if it was only a decent scenting day, there was certain to be a rattling gallop. Kill, they might not; they might lose their fox, and, to speak metaphorically, the concluding volume of the story might be wanting, but they rarely failed to have a rattling burst of fifteen or twenty minutes, during which, unless mounted on something with a turn of speed, you would assuredly soon lose sight of the hounds. It was a very pet fixture, in special favour with men who didn't care so much for the hunting but who thoroughly enjoyed a race; and only that the hounds took a deal of catching, they would have been in sore danger from some of the jealous horsemen behind them, riders who seemed as if, at all events for once, they had given black care the slip. A run from Claxby was usually productive of much chaff as well as rivalry. A good start was everything. The pace at first was generally so hot that there was little chance of making up leeway, and the old hands, of course, were clever in this particular, and usually contrived to steal away pretty closely after the fox; in fact, when there wasn't

a run from Claxby, it mostly arose from the excessive eagerness of the hard-going contingent to get away, whereby they headed their fox back and extinguished their own prospects of sport.

There were not many men at the cover side who knew Kitty Bourton even by sight, but she attracted, however, no little attention. A pretty girl with a good figure in that most becoming of dresses, a riding habit, is always pleasant to look upon, and there were many, and good judges too, who counted the horse as good-looking as her rider.

They knew nothing of her previous history, they did not know that she had turned out an ignominious failure at Newmarket, and they did not know that though she was appearing at the cover side, it was open to question whether she could negotiate the smallest possible fence that came in her way. Claxby Wood was a little off the road, and through two or three gates, and over one or two gaps about which Teetotum made a most uncalled-for fuss, Kitty followed with the stream, and when they arrived at the cover, they discovered that the hounds had been already thrown in, and were drawing. The fact was that the master, instead of lingering at the cross roads just above, which was the advertised meet had, with a view to preventing the fox being mobbed, stolen a march upon his field, and slipped directly down to the wood, the consequence of which was, that only those who were at the meet in good time had accompanied the hounds down to the cover. The late arrivals only awakening to the fact after wasting some few minutes at the cross roads. When Kitty and her companions arrived at the wood side, it was

evident that the hounds had found, and were apparently forcing their fox out on the further side of the cover, in consequence of which there was a perfect stampede on the part of Kitty's companions, who pelted off to reach that side of the wood as fast as their horses' legs could carry them.

Left alone in her glory, Miss Bourton could not help laughing.

"As for showing Teetotum hounds," she muttered, "we haven't seen the tail of one, and as for those gentlemen who galloped round the cover, I don't think they're likely to see one either; well, I suppose there's nothing more to be done than to jog home. An unlucky meet for a young woman who didn't mean to ride," and with these reflections, Kitty made her way leisurely back to the high road. She had not walked her horse a bare quarter of a mile in the direction of Lowood before, not thirty yards in advance of her, a little red creature slipped through the fence, crossed the road, leaped the grip, it could scarcely be called ditch, and low bank which divided the opposite field from the highway, and at a long easy gallop stretched across the open Downs.

Instantly, Kitty reined up her horse, and with pricked ears and quivering limbs, Teetotum stood awaiting what was going to happen. Very little babble, hardly a cry, the pace was too good for that, and the hounds streamed like swallows across the road.

"I didn't mean to ride," exclaimed Kitty, "but such temptation never fell in the way of woman since Eve ate the fatal apple," and without more ado



the girl turned her horse at the fence, which Teetotum jumped successfully, and in another moment she was tearing across a forty acres stubble field, half-a-dozen lengths ahead of the foremost horseman of the hunt. Teetotum might be reckoned slow amongst her compeers at Newmarket, but she was a flyer amongst her competitors in the hunting-field. With the strong lead she had obtained, and served by her light weight, Kitty felt that unless her mare fell down she would take a deal of catching.

"Cut down by a woman, by Jove!" cried one of the finest horsemen Danebury ever turned out, one who was well known on every leading racecourse in England, and who was himself riding a horse thoroughbred as Eclipse.

"Bustle up, gentlemen, or upon my soul, the young lady in front will be the only one of us that will see the end of it;" and as that famous horseman spoke, he took a judicious pull at his horse, and began to nurse him all he knew, for what he saw would be a tax on the powers of every hunter in the field. Hardly a cry, hardly a whimper as the pack raced across one big field after another, bounded only by the smallest of fences, and the mere pretence of ditches. Kitty's blood was up by this, and so was her mare's, and they took everything that came in their way without flinching; fortunately there was nothing so far to try Teetotum, and beyond that she jumped unnecessarily high at the slight impediments they encountered, she acquitted herself admirably. Such a spread-eagling of a field had rarely been witnessed.

The fox, which had probably been headed, had changed his original point. Unable to get back to the cover, he had circled round, and taken a line in the very opposite direction of his first intention. A good half the field had been thrown out by this manoeuvre, and the pace was far too good to enable these unfortunates ever to recover their lost ground. Away streamed the hounds across the open Downs, and still some lengths in advance showed the rifle-green habit. Next came Danebury's crack horseman, riding jealous as a schoolboy and trying hard to make science atone for the 21lbs. or thereabouts that he was giving away to his fair leader. Not very long before the Heath had fairly "risen at him" for the magnificent manner in which he had landed the winner of the One Thousand Guineas, and now, do his utmost, he cannot reach the girths of that dark brown mare. All in a cluster the hounds raced along, you might have covered them with a tablecloth, and wide on the right, the master laughed low in his beard as he thought how he had thrown off the mob of horsemen and how he could now safely say: "Ride over them if you can, gentlemen," while, at the same time, he wondered how long his gallant steed could be expected to last at this pace—a problem that was likewise beginning to concern all the leading men. Kitty only, gave no heed to it: utterly intoxicated with her triumph, that she must come to the bottom of Teetotum shortly never occurred to her. She had led the field by quite a dozen lengths for a good ten minr only those who have been in a

similar position can know what an elysium that is.

Suddenly, Kitty becomes conscious that directly in her front looms a line of sheep hurdles—not much of a fence perhaps, but just such a jump as even a trained hunter a little beat would attempt to gallop through. It never occurred to her for an instant to shirk them. She was not going to part with her lead by making a wide détour; but she did wonder very much what Teetotum would make of them. This was the first real jump she had hitherto come to, and she thought it more than possible that her mare would come to grief over the hurdles; still, there was apparently no sign of refusal about Teetotum, who came at them in right resolute fashion; but as she neared them, the mare was evidently puzzled: she swerved slightly to the right, half-checked her pace, and then, just as Kitty was wondering whether she was going to refuse or tumble head-foremost over them, she sprang into the air and bucked over them like a deer. It was a trick that might have spilled a practised horseman; as for Kitty, she caught Teetotum fairly by the mane, and though it was touch and go she managed to retain her seat. Speaking of it afterwards, she acknowledged that she "never was so near off in her life." On they went again, but Teetotum's ignorance of how to jump hurdles had cost Kitty her lead; though she still remained quite in front, and was one of the very few who could boast of being actually with the hounds. Another half-mile and the fun is over; the hounds suddenly throw up, and a welcome

check comes just in time to save more than one horse from being ridden quite to a standstill.

The master casts back, and the pack soon hit off his line again; but the ground is so stained with sheep that a bit of very cold hunting replaces the wild gallop they have so far revelled in.

"Miss Bourton," said the master, "I must congratulate you on the way your mare carried you. She has great speed; but how you stole such a march upon us at the commencement, I can't imagine."

"I have been in great luck to-day," replied the girl, smiling. "First of all, when I was riding quietly home, and had given up all idea of seeing the hounds, the fox crossed the road almost under my horse's nose, and secondly—and Kitty's eyes danced with fun as she made the admission—I was very lucky, indeed, not to come off over those hurdles."

"You're too candid," replied the master, much amused. "I only know that you led us all the way from Claxby Wood, and if you were nearly in trouble over those hurdles, I suspect we were all too anxious about ourselves to take stock of you. It was nothing of a jump, but our horses were pretty well told out."

Kitty remained out a little longer, but the cream of the thing was over: half-an-hour's cold hunting eventually resulting in the loss of their fox. Many were the congratulations offered Miss Bourton, and she felt almost discomposed at the attention she attracted. Her father happened to be in the stable-yard when she got home, and no

sooner did she see him than, dropping her reins, she clapped her hands and exclaimed:

"Three hundred, father, not a penny less; and when you write to Mr. Colaton, tell him guineas and you'll not 'bate a shilling."

"Then you got on well, lass," said Bourton, as he assisted his daughter to dismount.

"I was first away from Claxby Wood, and they never caught me till just before the first check. Even when they threw up their heads, I was amongst the first half-dozen, and only Teetotum hasn't learned how to jump hurdles; I should have kept the lead to the end."

"What do you mean? You put her at a sheep hurdle? It was risky, Kitty. You were rather lucky not to get a fall."

"I never was nearer, though not quite in the way you mean. Teetotum half stopped, and then bucked over when I didn't expect it. We were very near parting company, very near indeed. If we can only teach her to jump, father, she will make a grand hunter; she has pace enough for anything."

"That's just what she hasn't, Kitty," replied her father laughing. "If she had, she'd be earning her living now at Newmarket; however, I'm real glad you've had a good gallop."

"I never enjoyed anything so much in my life," rejoined the girl, with her face flushing at the bare recollection of it. *It was simply heavenly.*"

## CHAPTER IV.

### "TEETOTUM GOES TO SCHOOL."

TRUE to his word Dick Colaton turned up to pass Christmas with his cousins at the Myrtles, a pretty country house lying between Andover and Winchester, and where Robert Waters always contrived to gather a pleasant party at this season of the year. He was a man about four or five years older than Colaton, but full of fun and go, and never more pleased than when he had got the Myrtles full to the attics for this annual gathering. The Myrtles was not a big house, and though the way it was made to stretch upon this occasion was past belief, and, to reflective minds, offered a wondrous picture of what sort of quarters the younger bachelors must be allotted, still, there was never any want of merriment amongst the party. If it was an old-fashioned Christmas, all frost and snow, they skated, improvised sleighs, took long tramps, and at times even relaxed so far as to fall to snow-balling. If, on the other hand, the weather was open, every available animal was in request to enable them to attend the meet, and a few on horseback, but the majority on wheels, generally managed to be present at the cover side if the fixture was within reasonable distance. Those on wheels, too, contrived to see a good deal of the fun, and not seldom at dinner astonished those who had

ridden with how much they knew about the day's sport.

Now it so happened Mrs. Waters had driven one of her sisters in a dog-cart to that very meet at Claxby Wood at which Kitty Bourton had so greatly distinguished herself, and on that occasion, Mrs. Waters had found herself very much out of it; the hounds, indeed, had run clean away from those who thought to see anything of them on wheels, and Mrs. Waters naturally felt the greatest curiosity about what they had done; she imagined, as people usually do under such circumstances, that the run of the season had taken place upon that afternoon; we are always given to put a fictitious value on any pleasure we may happen to miss in this world. A very few inquiries were necessary to acquaint her with what did take place; and the fact that Miss Bourton, this new importation from Dick's country, had got away, Heaven knows how, at the tail of the hounds, and literally defied anyone to catch her, was the prominent feature in the story of that day.

"Dick," she exclaimed, as they gathered round the dinner-table on the evening of his arrival, "how was it you never told us that this Miss Bourton was what you men call 'a customer'? She cut the whole field down the other day from Claxby Wood; even the best of the Danebury horsemen couldn't catch her for ever so long?"

"Well, you rather surprise me; I certainly have seen her out, occasionally, in my own country, but I never heard of her riding in that fashion. I never even heard her talk of it."

"Leave him alone, Lucy," cried her husband,

"you mustn't ask such awkward questions; if she rode like she did the other day, you may be quite sure Dick was not near enough to see it."

Dick Colaton smiled at the chaff. He was good enough man over a country to hear such aspersions on his horsemanship with indifference. Suddenly a thought struck him, and he said:

"Do you happen to know what sort of a horse it was she was riding?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Waters, "there has been much talk about that brown thoroughbred mare, and great curiosity to see her perform again, but, though there have been several opportunities, Miss Bourton has never attended a meet since."

"Odd," remarked Colaton, "you don't happen to know, do you, whether that mare was ever raced?"

"Oh, yes, I understand so," said Robert Waters, "I'm told she's a cast-off from 'the flat.'"

"I know her," said Colaton. "I could have bought her for fifty sovereigns, the back end of last year."

"I don't think double, or perhaps treble, the money would buy her now; there are plenty of men about here who would certainly give a hundred for her to-morrow, on the chance of her turning out a jumper. You see this run we're talking of took place across the Down country, and there is hardly a fence in it; but it was a wonderfully quick thing, and Miss Bourton showed that at all events her mare could go fast."

Colaton made no reply, but again it shot through his mind that they had probably made a mistake about this mare at Newmarket. The trainer had



always considered that she could not stay, while her running had shown that she was deficient in speed for short distance races. Dick resolved in his own mind to go over to Lowood and make inquiries in the course of his visit. He was still in search of that superior hunter with which he trusted to pick up one of the local steeple-chases. If Joe Bourton gave a good account of Teetotum, if Kitty told him that the mare framed well for jumping, well then he would see if it was possible to buy her. He foresaw one difficulty about that—if Bourton thought her good enough to win a steeple-chase he was just the man to keep her in his own hands. He was fond of a bit of sport, and would rather chance winning a nice little stake than part with Teetotum for even a hundred and fifty. Dick was not mean, but when it comes to horse dealing everybody knows there never was man born of woman that didn't want the best of the bargain. Was it not just a matter of some such sum that cost one of our most eminent statesmen his life? He thought the cob offered him too dear at the price and bought one for less money, which made a mistake, threw him and caused his death. However no one knew better than Dick Colaton that whatever you may want to buy, it is always a mistake to display anxiety to possess it, and so, though much impressed by Teetotum's performance, he at once dropped the conversation.

Dick Colaton lost no time in taking Robert Waters into his confidence and telling him that if he could pick up Teetotum at a reasonable price he should take that mare back with him,

with a view to converting her into a steeple-chaser.

"I suppose, Bob, you can lend me something to ride or drive over to Lowood?"

"No trouble about that," rejoined his cousin, "but only remember, a mare that can go in our easy country would be no use whatever amongst your banks and ditches. I know what you're going to say, these cast-offs from the flat sometimes make very good steeple-chasers, but it doesn't follow because they can go with us, they will do so—however you had best slip over to-morrow afternoon and see about it."

The next day accordingly saw Dick Colaton arrive at Lowood. He found Kitty at home, but her father was unfortunately out, and Kitty could not say exactly how soon he would be back. Dick of course spoke to her about the run, and told her that he found she had established quite a reputation in that country. Kitty laughed and gave him her account of it, not even extenuating Teetotum's misbehaviour at the hurdles, but, she concluded triumphantly, "Nobody could catch me up to that, and I was close up with the leaders when the hounds threw up, half a mile further on."

"But how is it then you've have never been out since?"

"I've no other horse, Mr. Colaton," replied the girl smiling, "and Teetotum's at school for the present."

"What! do you mean you're teaching her to jump?" rejoined Dick.

"Just so," replied Kitty, "and she is improving

wonderfully. I assure you she goes over a ~~sa~~ deep hurdle very nicely now, if she is not hurried."

"I suppose you wouldn't hear of her being sold now?"

"I'm afraid I shan't have much to say to it," rejoined the girl, "if father gets an offer. He says Teetotum owes him a lot of money, and that if he has a chance to get it back over her he must take it. He says he'll get me another horse, but I should be very sorry I own to part with the mare."

"But surely Kitty your father has not been bid anything so big as that comes to."

"Oh! I don't know," replied Miss Bourton, "he's had one or two very handsome offers of late. You missed a real bargain, Mr. Colaton, when you wouldn't take her last year," and then the subject of Teetotum and her perfections was dropped.

And while Dick Colaton told her all the news of her old home, it dawned upon him that Kitty Bourton had grown into a very pretty girl.

"Something, I suppose," he muttered to himself, "in this Hampshire air. Seems to agree with both young women and young horses. Kitty has improved in looks wonderfully since she left the Scrubs." This was not altogether the case, but Dick had been accustomed to see her constantly from a child, and we are very apt to overlook beauty that grows up under our very nose. With the exception of that one day in September Dick had seen nothing of the Bourtons since they had left the Scrubs, and there can be no doubt that a separation of that description very often awakens the appreciation of a girl's good looks.

That eventually Dick should wish to have another look at Teetotum is needless to observe, as that Kitty should be only too delighted to exhibit her favourite. Once again Dick was struck with the improvement in the mare. She had grown big and muscular, was in rare health and hunting condition, and when the stableman threw off her rugs, her brown coat was almost bright enough to shave at. Dick was more struck with her than ever; he was falling in love in two places, and at this moment it would have been hard to say whether he was most smitten with the mare or her mistress.

"Welcome to Lowood, Mr. Colaton," said a cheery voice behind him. "What do you think now of the mare that nobody would look at in the sale ring a year ago? I suppose you've heard how she spread-eagled the hunt a month ago from Claxby Wood? There's a good race in her, I'm thinking, badly as she has performed hitherto. However, we shall see as she gets on with her education."

"Yes," replied Dick, as they shook hands, "I quite agree with you. I made a mistake in not taking her. Is there any chance of our coming to a deal now?"

"I doubt not," said the farmer, drily. "I reckon she'd be cheap at five hundred if she turns out what I expect her to, and it is not likely you will be quite of my way of thinking."

Joe Bourton had been so persistently unlucky in the little racing that he had done at Newmarket, that it was hardly to be expected he could refrain from bragging about the only one of his breeding that had as yet given any promise,

slight as the grounds were that he had to go upon.

"No," replied Dick, "I was prepared to spring a good deal from the original price you offered her at, but five hundred is beyond me. I'm not saying, for one moment, she isn't worth it, but we've yet to see that she can do more than beat a lot of hunters in a four-mile gallop.

"Never mind," rejoined Joe, "she beat one or two that day that were good enough to win selling races at Newmarket; but come in and tell us all the news from the old country, who's got married and who's gone dead, and whether they've got the winner of the Liverpool upon the Lincolnshire Wolds."

Although in the course of a desultory gossip Dick Colaton threw out more than one feeler on the subject of Teetotum, it was without any result. It was quite evident that Bourton was by no means anxious to sell, and that even if he had been bid his price he would have hesitated about parting with the mare. Dick saw that his errand was a failure, and when he at length got on his horse and had started on his way back to the Myrtles, he put away all thoughts of becoming the owner of Teetotum in the ordinary manner, and yet, strange to say, though the idea had not even taken tangible shape in his own mind, he was thinking half his journey back of Kitty Bourton, and could a shrewd observer have been cognisant of what was passing through his brain, he might have laughed and said, "There are more ways of buying that mare than one, and you might do a very great deal worse than marry the mare's mistress and claim Teetotum as her dowry."

And what did Kitty on her part think of Mr. Colaton's anxiety to possess himself of her favourite? Well, if Teetotum must go—and go she must, Kitty felt sure, if her father was bid anything like the money he expected—well then, she thought, she would as soon Mr. Colaton had her as anybody. He had always been kind to her from a child; she had grown up with a great admiration for him, and it would not require much on his part to convert that admiration into a warmer feeling. Kitty might be called a child when she came to Tatterton, but for all that she had arrived at an age when girls begin to think of sweethearts, and there was no more eligible young man amongst Kitty's circle of acquaintances than Dick Colaton.

“Yes,” she thought, “I should like Mr. Colaton to have her; not just yet, but when she's a little older, and has really learnt to jump. I should like him to have her and win one good steeplechase with her, and then to remember that it was Kitty Bourton who first discovered how good she was, and who made a hunter of her afterwards. I should like that; it would be nice to think that I had had a hand in his success, and that he knew it; ah! and better still, if he came and told me that it was so himself, and I think he would, too, for he is so thoroughly honest and straightforward,” and then Kitty gave a little laugh to herself as she murmured, “except perhaps when it comes to horse-dealing.”

## CHAPTER V.

### "DICK COLATON DEALS."

THE winter was over, spring was past, hunters had been long ago thrown up, but no more had been seen of Dick Colaton at Lowood. They heard from him occasionally, and he always enquired how Teetotum (now five years old) was getting on, but he made no further attempt to buy her, while Joe Bourton, on the other hand, had conceived what seemed quite an exaggerated idea of her value and capabilities. She had been most assiduously schooled all that year when the weather permitted, but when the ground got baked with the summer heat, Joe Bourton wisely relaxed that exercise, though even then, when a timely wet day or so softened the ground, Teetotum's education still went on over the artificial fences that had been put up in the barn close, and both Kitty and her father were delighted with Teetotum's progress. She never showed the least temper, but jumped both freely and well.

"She has the making of a grand fencer, lass, she only wants learning," quoth Joe Bourton one autumn morning, as Kitty landed her charge over a pretty high furze top rail, that was amongst the "impediments" erected in the barn close.

"She can jump anything I dare put her at," replied the girl.

"Have you ever told Mr. Colaton what a clipper she has become?"

"No, father, I've never said much about her to him. I don't want him to know anything about her till this next hunting season, and then when he comes down here I should just like him to see her go once."

"Ah!" replied Joe Bourton, "no one will ever see her go in this country, it's too easy for her, no one will ever know what a clipper she is till they see her over a steeplechase course in good company."

Joe Bourton indeed had to endure not a little chaff on the subject of this equine phenomenon, which as his brother farmers said, he kept wrapped up in silver paper, "which no money would buy, and which was so precious that he had never ventured to let it be seen out with the hounds but once. What was he keeping it for? Was there a steeplechase in England good enough for him? How was it that he had let the Ascot Cup slip through his fingers this year? What was he keeping this paragon of his for?" all of which Joe Bourton took with the utmost good humour, but could not help responding to with a touch of braggadocio:

"Don't you believe, gentlemen," he would say, "I haven't got a flyer, because I have; you may laugh, but she'd have beat more than beat her in the Ascot Cup this year. I'm not going to pretend she could have won, but the first time she gallops for 'the stuff'—well you'd better have some of yours down upon her, that's all I can say." And then Joe Bourton, who played a very good knife and fork at the farmers' ordinary, and topped up with a pint of



full-bodied port, indulged in a series of nods and winks, and became altogether excessively mysterious.

"Ah! but what we want to know," exclaimed one of his companions, "is when we're to have this here golden opportunity? We can all do wi' a bit more brass, never fear; when's our chance a-comin'?"

"What I says is this," replies Mr. Bourton, oracularly; he was apt to get oracular after two or three glasses of port, "when your horse is thoroughly 'fit' and there's a stake worth winning to be picked up, then's the time to slip him."

"It won't do, Hanway," interposed another of the party, "you don't draw Mr. Bourton in that way, and quite right too, sir," he continued, grinning approvingly at Joe. "I'll hold you a bottle of wine you don't get out of Mr. Bourton this afternoon when that mare of his is going to run."

"Is it a bet?" said Joe, and his eyes twinkled.

Mr. Hanway paused for a second, and then thinking it was just a toss up whether Bourton told them or did not, nodded, and rejoined "Done."

"You've lost, Mr. Hanway," rejoined Joe, "I can't tell you for the best of all possible reasons, I don't know; and now I propose that you order that wine and we drink it at once, but don't you be afraid, the mare will start for something before long, and you'll both get the office in good time."

A hearty laugh greeted Mr. Bourton's speech, and another bottle of port was ordered and drunk amidst high good-fellowship. Always a popular man, Joe had speedily won his way into the good graces of all of his class round about Andover, and though

they might laugh at this particular foible of his, yet it was always in a perfectly good-natured way.

At length hunting began again, and at the first meet of the Tedworth on their side the country, Miss Bourton made her appearance at the cover side mounted on the mare that was so much talked about. Many were the hats raised in congratulation on seeing her once more among them, mixed with a little good-humoured raillery, and a hope that she was not going to make such an exhibition of them all as she had done upon the last occasion on which she honoured them with her presence. It was a good fair hunting run that they had that day, and though Kitty was by no means favoured in the exceptional manner she had been before, still she undoubtedly went well, and held a forward place all through, but there were two things to be taken into estimation with regard to this performance of Teetotum's. First, that all that side of the Tedworth country was easy to get across, there were no big fences in it, nor anything approaching to them; and secondly, that Kitty, though a nice rider, could hardly be called a first-class horse-woman. She had not experience enough for that, and though she was as fairly cool as a girl could expect to be under the circumstances, knowing that her proceedings were keenly scrutinised, still she felt that she was hardly doing Teetotum justice. She knew that such luck as she had had upon her first essay was such as only occasionally falls to the lot of man or woman. She had gone decidedly well, well enough to have satisfied most girls, but she was not satisfied, and as she jogged home felt

that her day had been a failure. Teetotum had never made a mistake, had gone kindly as possible, in her hands, and the mare's fine speed had always enabled Kitty to hold her pride of place, and yet Kitty felt discontented.

She was a neophyte in the hunting-field or she would have known that it is only now and again that the chance comes to even a good horseman to cut down the field, though, like most triumphs, it is one we are always hungering to repeat.

Kitty Bourton was no whit conceited about her riding. She knew that she rode well, but was quite conscious that many of those around her rode better than she did, and her main anxiety was to do justice to Teetotum. She was just as firmly impressed with her favourite's capabilities as her father; she felt quite certain that her pet could gallop quicker than anything in the Tedworth Hunt, and as for her fencing, she considered that perfection; still there were two things Miss Bourton never took into consideration, to wit, that she rode barely ten stone, and that Teetotum's powers as yet had never been fairly tested in the jumping way.

But the leaf was barely off the oak when Dick Colaton once more made his appearance at Lowood; he had ridden over from his cousin's house to see his old neighbours, and also with an eye to doing a little bit of business if possible.

"Well, Bourton," he said, their first greetings over, "I hear the most wonderful reports of Teetotum. They tell me at the Myrtles that you are keeping her in reserve for a big race, is that so?"

"They chaff me a good deal about the mare," replied Joe, "just because I won't have her knocked about. I hold to my opinion, that there's a good race in her, and I don't mean her to start for any of your two-penny-halfpenny hunter stakes."

"That's just what I've come over to talk to you about," rejoined Colaton. "Now I've a nomination for the Derby Open Steeplechase next month. About three miles, and three hundred added, is that good enough for you?"

"Yes," said Bourton slowly, "that's a stake worth picking out. What I meant was I didn't mean to pull the mare out for a five-and-twenty pound hunter's plate. Yes, that, with backing her for a small stake besides, would be worth winning, and moreover I should get a good price for her if it came off."

"I'll tell you what," said Dick, "I'll give you five hundred pounds myself for her if she wins, and you may take the stakes to boot. Now I call that a sporting offer, take it or leave it. I've gone the length of my tether, and have no more to say."

Joe Bourton was silent, and evidently turning the thing over in his mind. How could he hesitate? thought Kitty, who had been listening to the conversation with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. The offer was princely, munificent, what could her father want more, what sum could he expect ever to get for Teetotum? Eight hundred pounds! Surely her father could never expect to get a higher price than that for the mare! It never occurred to Kitty that her favourite might be best. Dick Colaton

Teetotum's back was a combination that the girl thought must prove invincible over any country.

But Joe Bourton naturally saw the other side of the question; there was the possibility not only that his mare might be beat, but she might also be injured, and in that case he might find that nobody cared to give him even the fifty pounds he had originally offered to let her go for.

"It's a bargain," he exclaimed at last. "Now tell me what you want done with her. Shall I send her to Tatterton at once?"

"I think so," rejoined Dick, "but answer me one question. You say the stake's good enough, are you sure the mare's good enough? Will she keep on her legs?"

"Keep on her legs," rejoined Bourton, "why you can't throw her down. Of course, she is new at the game, but she has a perfect temper. Don't hurry her till she has settled down to her work, and then, trust me, you will find you can do as you like with your opponents. Run and slip on your habit, Kitty, while I tell them to get the saddle on the mare, I just want you to show Mr. Colaton how she jumps."

A very short time, and Kitty on the back of Teetotum paraded the barn close, while Colaton and her father stood by to see the mare taken over the artificial fences. Having taken her horse a good swinging canter to start with, the girl brought her down at a smart pace over the miniature course. Teetotum jumped in faultless fashion, and Dick Colaton was enthusiastic in her praise.

"You've made her a perfect fencer, Miss Kitty,"

he said, "and if she doesn't get flurried when she is put to racing, she really ought to have a great chance at Derby. I'd better have her up to my place as soon as I'm back, so that we may get used to one another before we appear in public."

The bargain was then and there concluded, and with hearty good wishes for his success at Derby, and strict injunctions from Kitty to take great care of her favourite, Dick Colaton departed.

When Joe Bourton announced officially, on the next market day at Andover, that he was going to send this paragon of his to run at Derby, and told his friends that they might back it as soon as ever there was any betting on the race, there was much laughter, and for the first time just a tinge of bitterness in the chaff with which he was greeted.

These sturdy Hampshire men did not relish the idea of the mare not being run in their own country; surely some of the local stakes were good enough for Joe Bourton to have run for, and then they could have all gone and seen themselves how this Teetotum ran.

"May be this swan of Bourton's will turn out only a goose after all," said Mr. Hanway, who was one of the most discontented, and chiefly for the reason that he secretly did believe in Teetotum's superiority, and had quite determined to back her, whenever she should start, and further that he had always looked forward to seeing her run, and thought Derby rather too far off to go to.

As he drove back to Lowood that night, Joe Bourton felt that it really had become incumbent upon him to win this steeplechase.

"By gum! if I don't," he murmured, "they'll make it very hot for me, the next market day at Andover—they'll chaff my very life out. However, I think I can trust to Teetotum; if she don't win, she'll at all events be there or thereabouts.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### "A BITTER DISAPPOINTMENT."

WHEN the entries of the Derby Open Steeplechase were published, the betting on the result got rather spirited. Some little curiosity was manifested about this nomination of Dick Colaton. It was rumoured that he had picked up a mare in the South with a great reputation as a hunter in those parts, but then Dick Colaton was only known as an unsuccessful horseman; he rode well, that the men of the Midlands all admitted, and they were right good judges too, but still there was no denying it, Dick Colaton never won—~~it~~ might be the man, it might be the horse, but there ~~was~~ the undoubted fact, Dick Colaton had never got first ~~past~~ the post yet. There was a great flourish of trumpets about Teetotum, when her name was first proclaimed, and considering she had never run in a public steeplechase, nobody could say that the handicapper had been lenient to her, still, for all that, it had somehow oozed out that the mare had a great private reputation, and the bookmakers at first were rather cautious in their dealings, but when it speedily transpired that there was very little money behind her, and that

those interested were content with the most moderate investments, they became more liberal in their offers, and both Bourton, his friends, and Colaton, were able to get a very remunerative price in return for the small stake with which they thought proper to entrust Teetotum. Still to the very last, she was reputed to be a dangerous outsider, and had she been only the mount of a popular jockey would have figured at a third of the price at which she started.

Never was a man more sanguine than Dick when he went down to Derby the day before the race. In his opinion Teetotum was as fit as man could make her; he had ridden her constantly during the last three weeks, not only in her gallop, but across country besides, and had conceived the highest opinion of her capabilities in every way. He looked upon her as a grand fencer, as possessed of a great turn of speed, and as for staying, although he had not been able to test her very thoroughly on that point, he would say quietly to his chums, "When she begins to tire, they'll be all pretty sick of it." He was, no doubt, of a sanguine disposition, and had been hopeful before on these occasions, but never had his friends seen Dick so confident as he was this time.

There was a great crowd at Derby to witness the Open Steeplechase. There were a dozen or fourteen runners, and as something like half of them were fancied more or less, the betting was pretty brisk on the result, and though to the very last moment it was rumoured that Teetotum was the dangerous outsider of the lot, the men of the Midlands could not be got to entertain the idea. They knew nothing about



the mare, and, still more to the point, they did not fancy the mare; it was only here and there that a real good judge, who trusted to his own opinion and was struck by Teetotum's easy, sweeping action in the "preliminary," was induced to invest a trifle upon her chance, and the consequence was she stood at quite a forlorn price in the betting when the horses mustered under the starter's hands, such an outside price, indeed, that Dick could not resist putting a little more on his mount at the last moment. There are races and races; some are of the most every-day description, and it is merely a case of so many horses starting and one of them winning, but in others quite a thrilling drama is played; it is the last act of a play which the sporting public have been interested in for weeks, perhaps months. The Derby Steeplechase unfortunately proved to be nothing of the kind, and may be briefly dismissed in half-a-dozen lines, hardly worth chronicling, indeed, except for the curious results which sprang from it. Dick Colaton rode Teetotum as patiently and carefully as man could do, but before they had gone a mile, two or three of his opponents commenced racing with him. The mare got flurried, and upon their reaching a fence with a widish ditch on the far side, took off too soon, turned a complete somersault, deposited Dick in the next field, and landed on her back in the ditch. Dick picked himself up as soon as he could, looked for a moment after his vanishing antagonists, and then muttered, "Well, I'm out of the race, that's certain. I only wish to heaven my mare was out of that ditch." But the extrication of Teetotum was destined to

prove a very tedious business. It was a broadish and deepish ditch, and she had somehow rolled into it upon her back; there was no room for her to turn and help herself; she was as helpless as a sheep that is cast; and similarly after struggling violently for a short time, she abandoned her vain efforts and waited to see what Providence in the shape of man might do for her.

But the getting of Teetotum out of her difficulties was no easy matter; ropes had to be fetched, and even then the men seemed puzzled how to use them to any advantage. As for Dick Colaton, he was in despair; the mare had ceased to struggle utterly, and he began to fear that her back was broken, or, at all events, most terribly injured. There were plenty of willing hands to assist, and suggestions about what was best to be done were more numerous than practical. At last a gentleman rode up, and in an authoritative manner said, "You'll never get her out in that way. Run away, some of you, and get spades and bevel down this side of the ditch. You'll be able to get the ropes round her then, and what's more, she'll be able to help herself a little. It's been a thundering awkward cropper, and, by Jove, Mr. Colaton, it's well for you you knew how to fall, or you might have been under her this minute."

Three or four men had darted off while he was speaking, and speedily returned with spade and pickaxe. A good bit of the bank was dug away, ropes got round her, and with a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, amidst a cheer from the crowd, Teetotum struggled to her feet and stood

with downcast head and trembling violently, a picture of abject terror.

"She's thoroughly cowed, poor beast," exclaimed Colaton. "I must get her into the nearest stable for a little while till she recovers herself."

"Yes, get her to the farmhouse just below there," replied the gentleman before alluded to. "They'll give you a comfortable box there to put her in for a couple of hours. I don't think she is seriously hurt, but she is frightened nearly to death, poor devil."

Dick led his mare ruefully away, and as he did so, strange to say, he thought more of the disappointment the result of the race would be to Kitty Bourton than he did of his own. She and her father had been, he knew, so very sanguine, and he had never even got half way round. He could not blame himself; there was no cause to press Teetotum, and he was riding her as steadily as possible; how she had come to drop her hind legs in that ditch and then roll over he could account for, but could not have prevented. She had got flurried and taken off too soon, hence the catastrophe.

Dreadful was the dismay when the telegram reached Lowood, and to his utter consternation Joe Bourton found that his mare was not even placed. True, that was explained by the two pithy words at the end of the message, "Teetotum fell;" but how came it that what he thought the most perfect fencer he had ever seen should have fallen? Of course he knew, none better, that the most faultless jumper may be upset at times. Perhaps she had been cannoned against, perhaps she had

been *ridden at*, for in his pride and jealousy Joe Bourton pictured to himself all sorts of people interested in preventing Teetotum from winning. It would have been useless to point out to him that the mare was backed for so little money it could have been worth nobody's while to plot foul play concerning her. Her victory would have been very profitable for the bookmakers, and her reputation as a smart hunter with the Tedworth was not sufficient to have led any one of her opponents to compass her destruction. Even when he got the first few lines from Dick Colaton explaining how the accident happened, he simply said :

“ Don't tell me, it was done a'purpose ; flurried, yes, that was their craftiness, they rushed her, they meant to flurry her, and I don't want to say a word against Mr. Colaton, Kitty, but he was that green he allowed them to do it ; never mind, my lass, we'll have her back, and the next time she starts—well, Mr. Colaton won't be up.”

As for Kitty, she took the thing very seriously ; her disappointment was great, she had set her heart on her favourite's winning with Dick Colaton on her back, and with one of those kinks that often occur in a girl's mind, she had come to identify her own destiny with that of Teetotum. If the mare did not succeed in her journey through life, no more would she, Kitty. Teetotum's triumph would have been her triumph, and though she shrank from admitting it, in the shadowy background fluttered the idea that when Dick Colaton won on Teetotum, Teetotum's mistress would win the heart of Teetotum's rider, and of late this idea had somehow

mixed itself up very considerably in the girl's speculations.

But if the Bourtons had been dreadfully disappointed at the intelligence of Teetotum's defeat, they were still more dismayed by the next intelligence that came from Tatterton. Dick Colaton wrote in utter despair about his charge.

"I am awfully sorry," he said, "but I regret to say that since the race we can do nothing with Teetotum. I have got her home, and she has had nothing but quiet and gentle exercise; when she is sent out 'schooling' there is no doing anything with her; show her a fence and she simply stops and shivers; as for inducing her to go near it, it is hopeless, not a lad in my stable, my stud groom, nor myself can get her ever to look at one. At the present moment I don't think she could be induced to jump a gutter. There is no mystery about it, her accident at Derby has so utterly unnerved her, that I'm afraid she will never be persuaded to jump again. She has been treated with the greatest patience and tenderness, but we can do nothing with her. It's a thousand pities, for I never was on the back of a finer natural fencer, but unless we can find some means to restore her confidence, she will be simply useless for cross-country purposes. I have set her going again and she gallops freely as ever, but unless in the course of the next two or three weeks I can induce her to jump, I don't see what I can do with her. I know this will be a dreadful disappointment to you and Miss Kitty as it is to myself, but it's the plain fact, and it's no use disguising it any longer."

## CLEVERLY WON.

"It's a bad business, a very 'bad business, and what to do about it I don't know. They've just messed that mare about and ruined her. I reckoned she was honestly worth what I put upon her when she left here, and now I don't suppose anyone would give me a twenty pun' note for her."

"I'll tell you what to do, father," replied Kitty, "send for her back; she has got thoroughly frightened; let me have her to ride again; I'll engage I coax her into jumping again before long."

"I think you're right, lass," replied Bourton, "at all events it's the only chance, as far as I can see. I'll write for her back at once."

Joe Bourton was quite right in one surmise, and that was that his friends in the neighbourhood would make much fun of the defeat of this wonderful mare of his. They did, and not the less because some of them had believed in Teetotum, and lost their money accordingly. Mr. Hanway in particular made himself rather unpleasant with the "I told you so" style of argument.

"Flew too high, Mr. Bourton, a little over-rated your mare. I always said you'd better pick up one of the local steeplechases in your own county instead of putting her in amongst a pack of first-class cross-country horses." To all of which Joe Bourton replied with imperturbable good temper and in a sanguine fashion that he was very far from feeling.

"No," he said, "we were unlucky at Derby, there's no denying it, but don't you believe that the company was too good for her? Our day will come,

Mr. Hanway, and you'll see then whether I over-rated my mare."

It was all very well for Joe Bourton to brazen it out in this way, but he could not get Colaton's letter out of his mind, and knew in his heart it was very probable Teetotum would turn out perfectly worthless.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### KITTY IS AGAIN CONFIDENT.

BUT before Dick Colaton was able to send away Teetotum from Tatterton an incident took place which made things worse than ever. The stud groom, a steady, good-tempered and capable man, had Teetotum out early one morning in company with a veteran hunter of his master's called Paddy and after giving the pair a brisk canter set to work once more to induce the mare to jump. It was apparently hopeless; in vain did the boy on Paddy, give her lead after lead over a very easy fence, she could not be induced even to face it. Her rider patted her, coaxed her, and brought her down again and again just behind her veteran companion who didn't know what it was to refuse, but Teetotum always stopped dead short and trembled.

She showed no sign of temper, but she was evidently afraid to try to jump. Coaxing having proved unavailing, Jenkins, the stud groom, rather lost his temper and called upon the boy to ride her at it in the most determined fashion, but all with no avail. At last the lad said :

"If you will let me have a whip, Mr. Jenkins, or a pair of spurs, I might get her over."

"Never you mind, my lad. I'll do what flogging I think necessary myself," and so saying he walked up to a heap of cut thorns that were lying not far off, took a long "pleacher" out of it, and taking his stand by the fence said, "Bring her down again quietly, quite slow, mind, and she goes over this time, or I'll know the reason why."

The boy did as he was told, turned the mare a few yards back and then put her at the fence. As usual, she stopped and shivered with glaring eyes and distended nostrils, and then without more ado Jenkins gripped his "pleacher" and proceeded to administer a severe castigation to his obstinate charge across her quarters. At first it seemed to produce no effect in the desired direction, but the boy upon her held her in a grip of iron, and at last the punishment got more than she could bear. Gathering up her courage, she suddenly bucked over it, much after the manner in which she had jumped that first hurdle with Kitty.

So convinced was Jenkins of the efficiency of this species of instruction that he literally flogged her or hunted her over the fence three or four times, until in the end she was so terrified by Jenkins and his "pleacher," that of two evils she had apparently elected to choose the less and jumped the fence to escape from the wrath of the angry stud groom, but jump though she did it was always in the same way, right up in the air, which, though it landed her safely over the trifling fence she was set to compass, would have certainly brought her to grief over a



larger obstacle. Contented with the success he had achieved, Jenkins now took his charges home and reported what he had done to his master. Dick was very angry, the man had been with him some time, was a good man and not given to lose his temper with his horses, and Dick quite recognised that there were occasions upon which it was quite necessary to try what coercion would do. If Teetotum had been his he would have looked upon it that Jenkins had probably exercised a wise discretion, but he was particularly anxious to return the mare to Lowood with the assurance that nothing but persuasion had been resorted to and that she had never been punished for her contumacy. Now it was impossible for him to say that, and he thought it would be well to see the following morning what the effects of this lesson might be.

This could hardly be termed satisfactory. Jenkins had armed himself upon this occasion with a heavy driving whip, which however his master peremptorily forbade him to make use of, but the mere sight of it had the desired effect. Teetotum jumped the fence selected for her some half-dozen times, but always in the same startled, panic-stricken manner, and it was quite evident that it was only her terror of Jenkins that impelled her to the attempt. Dick Colaton speedily brought that lesson to a conclusion.

"It's no use, Jenkins," he said, "she certainly gets over, and it's rather a wonder she does; she jumps so high, she looks as if she would come down in the same place; but as for her fencing in that manner, if she were really galloping it would be of

course absurd ; she would go head over heels almost immediately."

"Well, sir," replied the stud groom, "it surely is better she should get over in some shape than not get over at all?"

"I don't call that getting over," said Dick drily. "I shall send her back to Hampshire to-morrow. She must jump in very different style from that if she is ever to win a steeplechase. She can, and in time when she has quite got over her fright, perhaps she may again, but she'll never do so with us. You've made a deuce of a mistake, you've only substituted one fear for another."

When Teetotum returned to Lowood it was quite a curious thing to witness her recognition of her young mistress. She rubbed her muzzle against Kitty's shoulder, whinnied, and as far as horse could do, expressed her delight at seeing her again. The girl fondled and caressed her, as she murmured :

"You're in sad disgrace, my dear, and they tell me you will never jump again. But you will for me *I know*, and you will have to begin to-morrow morning."

But Kitty found that Mr. Colaton had not in the least exaggerated in his account of Teetotum. When she was shown a fence the next morning she trembled violently, and began to look with a startled air, both to right and left of her, evidently with the memory of Jenkins, and that long thorn binder which he had used so mercilessly ; but jump she would not. Joe Bourton, who was out to witness the experiment, shouted out :

"Don't hurry her, Kitty, she'll never be cured except by coaxing."

"No," replied the girl, "I'm not going to bother her much these first few mornings, and then I think it will be best to begin with the artificial fences in the barn close; she knows them well, and if we can only induce her to take those, she will regain her confidence."

But day after day slipped by, and sanguine as Kitty was, even she began to despair, so slow was the progress she made with Teetotum. It was true she had got her to jump a little; but it was not in her old style, it was always in a nervous, startled manner, which showed that the mare had not at all recovered her confidence. Anyone who witnessed her performance at present, would have predicted that either with hounds or in a steeplechase, she was pretty certain to give her rider a fall. And do what she would, Kitty could not improve her. She had never ventured to take her to a meet for fear of the consequences; but, one day, when she was out riding, Kitty unexpectedly came across the hounds, Teetotum cocked her ears, fidgetted on the road, was evidently excited, and suddenly an inspiration seized the girl; the hounds were running in a field to her right, and without more ado, Kitty suddenly put her mare at the small fence which separated her from them; it was an easy country and the hounds were not running very fast, Teetotum's blood was up, she seemed to have recovered her nerve, and till they lost their fox in a large cover not very far beyond them, Kitty found herself carried beautifully. True, she had not ridden over anything very big, but still the mare had jumped freely and confidently in the

style she was wont to do before her ill-starred visit to Derby.

When Joe Bourton heard of this his enthusiastic disposition caught fire at once, and he instantly proclaimed that they would win the Liverpool. He had never even yet ventured to disclose to his wife and daughter that Teetotum was nominated for that event; and, as a mare that had merely tumbled into a ditch at Derby, her name had attracted no attention amongst the entries with the racing community, doubtful, indeed, whether Mr. Hanway and his sporting brethren had even noticed it.

In the days of which I am writing the Grand National was a very different race from what it is now, I mean in the interest it evoked and the very heavy betting that used to take place upon it. Such stakes as thirty thousand pounds were often taken out of the Ring on this occasion, and when Salamander won his owner and friends were credited with winning quite that amount, while at the very fall of the flag, long odds were obtainable about their horse. So many horses had been trained, schooled and kept on purpose for this event, all of which were heavily backed to win large sums, that a horse without previous winning credentials was pretty sure to be unnoticed by the general public, by which is meant that general public which speculates on race horses. He might be sanguine, but it is not to be supposed that Joe Bourton had been, as yet, so mad as to back Teetotum; whenever that mania should seize him he would be likely to get very liberal offers,

indeed, against his mare; for it required much faith after the performance at Derby to believe in the possibility of her getting over the course at Aintree, and the more people knew about Teetotum the less belief would they have in that whimsical animal.

Mrs. Bourton was, as might have been supposed, a real comfort to the two conspirators—if they may be called so.—“She had never known any good come of backing race-horses; but the backing of race-horses to jump, which it was well known they couldn't, was a-flying in the face of Providence, and a throwing of money into the fire, that Joe ought to be ashamed of; as for Kitty, well, whether a giddy fly-away-thing like her broke her neck or no, perhaps, wasn't of much consequence. At all events, her father didn't seem to think so. If she thought trapesing about with the hounds was the way to get married, she was mistaken. Hardworking men of their class didn't want hunting wives, they wanted a helpmate that would look after the house and the dairy, who knew what butter was worth a pound, and how to get the top price in the market. Well, she should have her daughter brought home on a hurdle, and they should finish their days generally in the workhouse, and all she would ask her husband to remember when that time should come, would be that she had always said so, that she had always protested against that racing rubbish, that she had said her say now, and there was an end of it.”

Dear, good lady, was it likely there was an end of it? As if Kitty and her father would not be treated

with this Jeremiad daily, and as if they didn't agree between themselves at last that they must either justify their ambition by winning a big race with Teetotum or part with that fair deceiver.

"We can't stand being scolded every day, my gal, and I'm getting pretty tired of being chaffed every week in Andover market. We may as well be hung for a sheep as a lamb. Sink or swim, break the bank or burst, we'll go for the Grand National. It's not likely it'll come off, but if Teetotum only runs forward in it, that will sell her, and show besides that we weren't altogether out in our reckoning."

"I had her out this morning, father, and she went beautifully. I can put her and take her anywhere. The question is, will she do for anyone else what she does for me? You must write to Mr. Colaton, father, and ask him to come down here and ride her a bit. You would like him to ride her in the big race, wouldn't you?"

"I dunno, lass—I dunno; he's a good man, but somehow he's unlucky. He never does somehow get 'em home in front."

"Oh! father, he must ride! I know Derby was a bitter disappointment to him. He's a good horseman, and I'm sure nothing you could name would please him so much as to ride the winner of the Grand National, and we've got her in the stable, father; you and I know it, though nobody else thinks so. Let him come down here, three or four weeks before the race, and make friends with Teetotum, under my guidance. I've got to understand her at last. She has plenty of courage, but she's a nervous thing. She will do anything for you when

she knows you, but she is afraid of strangers, and I don't believe she would ever have had that fall at Derby if she had only known Mr. Colaton. There's more to be done by talking to her than there is with whip or spur. If Mr. Colaton had only known her, and encouraged her at that fatal fence at Derby, I don't believe she'd have made any mistake over it. You should just see her shake her head when I speak to her, as much as to say," concluded the girl, laughing, 'All right, young woman, don't you be frightened, I'll be careful!'

And so it was arranged that a few days more and Kitty should write to Mr. Colaton, in her father's name, informing him of the change that had come over Teetotum, of what they proposed doing, offer him the mount in the Grand National, and in the event of his acceptance, suggest to him the advisability of coming down to ride the mare in her gallops and schooling. "In short," said Joe, "you must make him understand that unless he is prepared to do that I don't consider that he can possibly do Teetotum justice in the race on account of her peculiarities—that we attribute the disaster at Derby mainly to the fact that he and Teetotum didn't understand each other."

This letter duly despatched, Kitty set to work more assiduously than ever to perfect her charge. Joe Bourton breathed no word of his intention that his mare should compete at Liverpool, and that idea never for one moment crossed the minds of the *habitues* of the Tedworth Hunt, at whose meets, when on their side the country, Kitty was now a pretty constant attendant. One thing they certainly did

notice, what a very smart hunter Teetotum had become; in that rather easy country she fenced beautifully, and it was common talk with the Hunt that when it became a question of speed, Miss Bourton could cut them all down.

Kitty meanwhile was living in a sort of charmed dream, destined to culminate in the victory of Teetotum and her own wedding: the two things had got inextricably mixed in her mind, and that somehow Dick Colaton's triumph at Liverpool would lead to his marrying her she had quite persuaded herself.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### CLEVERLY WON.

WHEN Dick Colaton got Kitty's letter, he was simply thunderstruck. The idea of attempting to win the Derby of steeplechasing with a horse that had fallen before she had gone a mile in her only public essay! Liverpool was a course that required a thorough fencer to get over it, and though he had no doubt that they had succeeded in making Teetotum do better than she had with him, still this was flying at high game with a vengeance. Then even supposing that the mare was good enough, which he didn't for one moment believe, was he himself fit to ride in a race in which he would have to meet all the best horsemen in England? True, he knew there had been cases in which a by no means brilliant rider had steered his horse to victory, but in that case he felt certain that the winner must



have had a great deal in hand, and he certainly did not think that was the case with Teetotum. She was fast undoubtedly, amongst hunters, and if they had got her to jump well, might perhaps pick up a minor steeplechase, but to win the Grand National requires something better than he considered she was. What was he to do, what was he to say? he wouldn't for the world offend Miss Bourton, and she wrote to him as if the possibility of his refusing to ride had never presented itself to her mind.

To do Dick justice, he had no thought about his neck, but he rather shrank from the idea of making a show of himself. The raillery about his Derby fiasco had been hard to put up with, and that he, an unknown man, should dream of riding that unlucky mare in the Grand National would provoke much ironical comment among his sporting companions.

But it was evident not only did Kitty expect him to ride, but she looked forward to his winning; and himself, he could see no prospect of even getting through the race respectably. Well, one thing was clear, it would be very good fun to go for two or three weeks to Lowood, and in that time he thought, Teetotum would probably settle the question for him, and prove, even to the satisfaction of sanguine Kitty Bourton, that it would be useless to send her to Liverpool. When he mentioned to Jenkins that he had been asked to ride Teetotum for the Grand National that worthy replied:

'Mr. Bourton must be mad to think she can have the ghost of a chance of winning there, but I shan't think him half as mad as you, Mr. Colton

if you ride her; she will most likely give you another nasty fall, and you may not come out of it so well as you did at Derby."

Still in Hampshire, although the first idea of Joe Bourton's mare going for the Liverpool was met with a roar of laughter, yet a few of the men who had seen her out lately began to think that she might have an off-chance. They had not witnessed her failure, bear in mind, but they had seen her go remarkably well on many occasions, and enquiries began to be made as to who was to have the mount; but this the Bourtons kept a profound secret, indeed, if Dick Colaton should refuse, Joe Bourton did not quite know where he should look for a jockey; and Colaton's reply to Kitty had been diplomatically couched—he was willing to ride, he said, provided that he and Teetotum got on together during the fortnight he proposed to stay at Lowood.

Amongst those most strongly impressed with Teetotum's capabilities was Mr. Robert Waters. He knew that his cousin had thought very highly of the mare, and until the fiasco at Derby had been anxious to purchase her; now he believed him to have washed his hands of her altogether, and it never entered his head that Dick Colaton might be asked to ride her again; he was very curious to know who was to have the mount at Liverpool, as for the matter of that so were most of the people round Lowood.

The mystery about it, maintained by Joe Bourton, naturally whetted their desire to learn the jockey's name. Waters was a man who rather liked a modest bet on a big race, and about Teetotum, he

knew that a very liberal price would be always obtainable.

He wrote to Dick Colaton, and told him that he had been somewhat premature in returning Teetotum.

"I cannot understand," he continued, "how it was she came to grief with you, a finer fencer I never set eyes upon. You laugh at the idea of sending her to Liverpool, but Bourton is determined to run her for the Grand National, and is wonderfully mysterious about who is to steer her. Of course, I know he will meet amongst her opponents many far above the class of ordinary hunters, but if you saw her go here, I'm sure you would say that she herself is that; several of us think if there is only a good man up, she most certainly possesses a chance."

"Rather a big if," muttered Dick Colaton, as he read his cousin's letter, "and I wonder what sort of a man they will consider me; it seems almost impossible that they can have so utterly changed that mare, and yet Bob is not the man to talk at random, and call Teetotum a fine fencer, because he has seen her do a small hedge and ditch in good style; however, time is getting on, and the sooner I go to Lowood and see about things the better."

The Bourtons welcomed Dick Colaton with the utmost cordiality, and when the next morning he was taken to see Teetotum, he was fain to admit that she looked ready to run for her life, and that if she was only half as good as she looked she must have a chance in any company. But he was destined to be considerably surprised the next morning,

when, upon getting up early to ride Teetotum in her exercise, he found that was not Bourton's intention.

"No, Mr. Colaton," said the farmer, "I want you up on the other, please. The black horse will carry you nicely. Before you get on Teetotum, we want her to get thoroughly used to the sight of you, and also to the sound of your voice. Kitty will tell you that she can do more by talking to her than in any other way. There's no nasty temper about her, but she's a terrible nervous mare, and she'll never do herself justice unless she knows you."

So that morning Dick Colaton on the black horse simply led Teetotum in her work. They went schooling after the canter, and Dick was fain to confess that nothing could go and jump better than Teetotum did in Kitty's hands. The question was, how would it be when he should get upon her back? and as Miss Bourton told him, he mustn't think of that for close upon a week.

When they came in to breakfast, and Mrs. Bourton had expressed her usual surprise at seeing Kitty return safely—for the good lady was fond of picturing every conceivable catastrophe connected with Teetotum—from finishing their career in the Union to her only child being brought home a gory corpse on a sheep-hurdle, and loudly bewailing what she called her husband's mad infatuation to anyone who would listen to her—"What," she would ask, "has a plain English farmer to do with horse-racing? There's Joe, wasting his time, spending his money, and risking his child's neck, all because he has got it into his

head that he owns a wonder in horseflesh. As everyone knows, she is always well beaten whenever she runs. You are a single man, Mr. Colaton, and have neither wife nor family, but I should think even you might hesitate before throwing your life away, as you too probably may, in riding this wonder of Joe's at Liverpool."

"Never you mind, missis," the farmer would reply, good-humouredly, "this is the only race-horse I've got left, and, win or lose, this is the very last shy I'm going to have at it. In the meantime, what's the use of looking at the black side of things?"

But if Mrs. Bourton took a despondent view of things, it was not likely that Dick Colaton would continue to do so; he might have had misgivings about the Liverpool to start with, pictured himself, for instance, vainly trying to induce Teetotum to jump the first fence amongst the jeers of the crowd. But that view of the case was speedily dissipated, it was impossible to be riding and schooling with Kitty every morning and not get infected with the girl's own enthusiasm, and she seemed able to do what she liked with the mare. Dick had not the slightest thought of refusing the mount now; he felt quite ready to risk his neck, and a spare one to boot, if he had had it, to gratify pretty Kitty Bourton. The girl was certainly looking her very best, the healthful exercise and the constant companionship of the man she loved had brought a light into her eyes that even made her father marvel. She had quite innoculated Dick with her own unbounded belief in Teetotum's abilities to win the Grand National.

By constantly going into her box and caressing her, there could be no doubt Dick had made Teetotum know him thoroughly, and at length Kitty decided that it was time for him to ride her. It was rather an anxious morning when they changed their accustomed mounts, and Kitty appeared on the old black horse, while Dick was on the back of the favourite. How would she behave when it came to the fencing? Would his presence in the saddle recall to her memory that terrible disaster at Derby? By Kitty's advice Dick kept talking to the mare, and then the girl gave him a lead at a low hedge with a ditch on the far side. There was not a bit of hesitation, Teetotum shook her head, came at it in right resolute fashion, and flew it beautifully, and further continued to behave all through the morning in the same exemplary fashion.

"You see, Mr. Colaton," said Kitty, as they dismounted, "she only wants to know you, she will go as kindly as possible now you are acquainted; you were strange to her, and that made her nervous when you rode her at Derby."

"Yes, and when you come to know people you get to care for them, and wonder whether you dare ask them to do what you want. Ah! Kitty, I am anxious to win this Liverpool for your sake. If I do my best, will you give me what I ask for riding Teetotum? You know what I mean."

But the girl remained silent, with downcast eyes.

"You know what I would have," continued Dick. "Will you give me yourself?"

A pause of some seconds, and then a little hand stole into Dick's, and Kitty replied:

"I think, Mr. Colaton, I could have given you that whether you rode for us or not, and now you fill me with fear. I begin to think I was wrong to ask you; if anything happens to you, I shall never forgive myself."

Dick's sole reply was to clasp her in his arms, and, as he kissed her, he said gaily:

"Don't be frightened, Kitty, I feel sure Teetotum won't make a mistake, and have a presentiment that I shall win both the Grand National and a wife before the month is out."

"You must make me one promise, Dick, that this shall be your last steeplechase? Father says it is the last horse he shall ever run, and you must promise that it is the last race you ever ride."

"That's a bargain, Kitty," rejoined Dick, laughing. "And no great concession, either. If I win, it will be only wise to retire upon my laurels. To have taken the blue ribbon of steeplechasing will serve to talk about for the remainder of my life; while, if I'm beaten, I shall come to the conclusion that I'm no good at the business."

"Nonsense, Dick; but remember, your neck is not your own property now, and I'll not have it risked any more."

The pretty air of authority she assumed over him was very sweet to Colaton, and he went into the house so elated by his good fortune, that he had a vision of being cheered as victor at Aintree, and the chime of wedding bells faintly audible amidst the hurrahs of the crowd.

When Kitty told her parents of her engagement, she received most characteristic felicitations from both of them.

"I congratulate you with all my heart, lass," said Joe Bourton. "You've done well out of the business," he continued, with a jolly laugh; "for you've landed a husband out of it, and what's more, a better fellow never drew on top-boot than the Squire."

"I suppose I ought to congratulate you, Kitty," said Mrs. Bourton; "but though you're engaged, it's like you'll never be wedded. I'll kiss you heartily, my dear, when this dreadful race is over; but dear—dear, d'ye think if I was in your shoes I'd let my man risk his life in that fashion?"

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## CHAPTER IX.

### "SINISTER RUMOURS."

WHEN Dick Colaton was seen riding Teetotum with the hounds, it naturally speedily oozed out that he was to have the mount at Liverpool, and at first this threw considerable cold water on those who had fancied the mare for the Grand National; but they had one or two opportunities of seeing how Dick Colaton went, and that somewhat re-established their good opinion of her chance. Still Hampshire at that time had one or two crack gentlemen riders of its own, and the County naturally rather resented a Hampshire horse not



having native talent on its back. Bob Waters, who, now he knew that his cousin was riding Teetotum, took much increased interest in the mare's performances, was very regular in his attendance at the Cover side, and was delighted to see how well and temperately Teetotum jumped with Dick.

"By Jove! old man!" he said, meeting him one day in Andover Market, "how well you went last Friday. You were far and away the best of us all. I have taken four hundred to ten about your mount; backed it, the minute I saw the entries. I thought she was bound to be well in, and she is."

"What, you've seen the weights?" exclaimed Dick. "What have they put upon her?"

"Ten stone four, you can't complain she has too much to carry. Can you ride it?"

"Not quite. I shall have to declare a pound or two over; but that won't signify."

"No, I don't suppose so. I'm now going to tell you something that may. There's a fellow down here called Gregson, a professional jockey, and a very good one too; but he's an awful thief, and is in with a lot of very shady bookmakers. He's been monstrous inquisitive about Teetotum of late, and bragged in his cups the other night that she wouldn't win the Liverpool—it wasn't likely, wasn't to be supposed, even if she was good enough, that a man like Mr. Bourton, who wasn't even on the turf, would be allowed to win a big race like that. Now, no harm is likely to come to her here, but you'll have to look sharply after her when you get her down there."

"Oh! we'll take very good care she comes to no harm in the stable."

"No," said Waters, "I don't suppose he'll try to interfere with her there; but what you'll have to look after, is interference in the race if you look at all like winning."

"I see," replied Colaton. "I suppose this Gregson is riding in the race?"

"Pretty certain to be, and you'll have to keep a watchful eye on him—he is given to all sorts of shifty manœuvres I'm told."

Dick was rather meditative as he rode back to Lowood. Although sanguine, he was fully conscious that he had a very difficult task before him; let alone finding one amongst the competitors that was too good for him, there was all the luck of the race, and now it seemed that there was a likelihood of his having to guard against foul riding besides, and Dick was quite aware what an unscrupulous horseman can do on these occasions. He might well look rather grave over what his cousin had told him; to be purposely knocked over when his chance of winning looked rosy, would be too provoking, and he was aware that such things had been, and if he did not win, or at all events go very near it, his bride that was to be would be sorely disappointed.

These were halcyon days for Kitty, although at times she was sadly troubled by her mother's gloomy predictions. If anything should happen to her lover in the race, she would never forgive herself. But for her, Teetotum would never have been sent steeplechasing at all; and but for her, Dick

certainly never would have been asked to ride her. Still, her lover always took a most cheery view of the case, and then the girl's spirits would rise again, and all her old enthusiasm would return. She believed implicitly both in Dick and Teetotum, as the former said:

"She don't know how to fall now, Kitty, she never puts a foot wrong. I may not win, but don't you think I run any risk."

"Oh, Dick, I hope not," rejoined the girl, "if anything should happen, and mother says she is sure it will——"

"Ah, well," interrupted Colaton, "remember your mother is given to take the most funereal view of things; I'm sure you must have seen a good many of her little prophecies turn out untrue?"

"I admit that," said Kitty, laughing, "if all the evil had come upon us that mother has predicted, I don't know where we should have been now."

"Then there can be no cause for you to make yourself uneasy; you and your father are to ~~come~~ down and see it, and, win or lose, we'll have a good time at Liverpool."

It need scarcely be said that Dick Colaton had breathed no word to Kitty of what his cousin had told him. Dick could hold his tongue upon occasion, and had not thought it advisable, at present, even to let old Bourton know what he had heard. Could he have looked into the bar parlour of a sporting little hostelry on the outskirts of Andover, he would have seen that Bob Waters had good warrant for what he had said.

Three persons were gathered round the fire of the

room. One, a big, fat, heavy-jowled man, was seated on one side of the fire-place, smoking a cigar and sipping gin and water; he was evidently engaged in earnest conference with his two companions. Opposite him was a man something of his own type, but perhaps a couple of sizes smaller, while in the centre, sat a little dark wiry man with a slightly hooked nose, and a villainous cast in his eye; impossible to discover, exactly, what he was looking at, but you would not be very long in his society before you discovered that very little escaped that cross-eyed vision of his.

"Now, what I say is this," said the big man, emphasizing the remark with his fat fore-finger, "we want money, that's nothing, most people do, but we must have money, and we will have money. Reubens there," and he pointed to the man opposite him, "will tell you we've got a dark young 'un good enough to win four Liverpools out of five. Isn't that so, Mr. Reubens?"

"That's my idea," replied that gentleman, "and we tried him pretty high last week, I can tell you."

"Well," said Gregson, "that's the one, I suppose, I am retained to ride?"

"Not altogether," rejoined the stout man, who answered to the name of Moore, "we've got old Todhunter in, besides, and in spite of his weight he's safe to be handy at the finish. What we want you to do, Sam, is to ride *him*, and take care of the young 'un," and Mr. Moore winked pleasantly at the jockey.

"I understand," said Gregson. "I'll watch over him like a nurse. Keep the rails for him when we

get into the straight, and knock over anything that looks dangerous at the last hurdle."

"That's it, Sam, that's it," exclaimed Mr. Reubens, "that's the identical little game; you take care of Catamount, and you'll find that Catamount has taken care of you as soon as the "All right's" pronounced."

"What did you say was the figure, Mr. Moore?" enquired, Gregson with a grin. "It's as well to have a clear understanding on these little points, let parties be ever so friendly."

"Two hundred if it comes off, Sam," replied Mr. Moore, slowly, "to be paid to you the evening of the race."

"Two hundred if Catamount wins, that's good enough," replied Gregson; "you can depend upon me, Mr. Moore, that at all events, one of his most dangerous antagonists will be out of it, but I can't watch 'em all."

"No, no, Sam," replied the bookmaker, "we shall know at the last what we're most afraid of and you must keep your eye upon that. Now you told me you had got something pretty smart in this neighbourhood—what about that?"

"Well," said Gregson, "this Teetotum, there is no doubt is fast and a is fine fencer, but in the only steeplechase she ever ran she fell, and this young Colaton who is going to ride her, he too is pretty green, they'll both get flurried when it comes to racing, and I should think give no trouble there; if she once gets into the straight she has a wonderful fine turn of speed."

"Well, Sam, we shall look to you to keep an eye

upon her and tell us all about it at Liverpool; she has been backed lately by somebody I take it, for she has advanced a few points in the betting."

"Time's up," interrupted Reubens, "we've got to catch the train. Gregson understands now perfectly what we want him to do," and with a friendly nod to Sam, the two bookmakers took their departure.

As for Sam Gregson, he remained ruminating for some minutes on the job he had undertaken. Character he had none to lose, and was willing at any time to risk his neck for a tenth of the money; he considered Mr. Moore's offer princely, and at length walked home with the satisfied air of a man who has done a good morning's work.

As the time for the Grand National drew near, Mr. Hanway and the neighbouring farmers, besides many of the gentlemen of the hunt, got tremendously excited about Teetotum's chance. The mare was out constantly with the hounds, and carried Dick splendidly as far as she was permitted to do so, but with her Liverpool engagement in view she was naturally ridden rather tenderly; she was in grand condition, and neither Joe Bourton nor Dick had the slightest doubt of her staying every yard of the way.

There was a good deal of money in small sums sent up from the country around Lowood to put upon Teetotum, and the consequence was that the mare had advanced in the betting to twenty-five to one.

Sam Gregson, keeping those oblique optics of his continually upon her, began to think there

might be something in Teetotum after all; still on those occasions when he was far advanced in gin and water he still defiantly observed that it wasn't likely they would ever let her win, and the constant recurrence of this expressed opinion on Mr. Gregson's part gradually awoke an uneasy feeling around Andover that Teetotum would not meet with fair play; not that people believed that Sam Gregson himself contemplated any villainy of this description, but as a man well versed in turf matters his opinion carried weight with it.

These rumours, as was natural, before long reached Joe Bourton's ears; he thought it very odd, and at once commenced to enquire as to the source from which they emanated, and as soon as he learnt that it was from Sam Gregson, he burst into a jolly laugh. "That thief!" he said, "he has run crooked all his life and can't believe in a race being fairly won. If there is a collision next week, if one horse swerves in front of another and so baulks him at his jump, Gregson will swear it was all done on purpose. I happen to know that fellow of old; he can ride, but it ain't very likely anyone will trust him with a mount for the Liverpool."

Mr. Gregson with all his vapouring had never let it escape his lips that he was going to ride in the big race, and the only person in the neighbourhood who had any suspicion of it was Bob Waters, even he knew no more than that he had chanced to see Gregson's name mentioned as a probable rider in one of the sporting papers. But the Saturday before the big steeplechase all the papers con-

tained a list of the probable starters and their respective jockeys, and they all announced authoritatively that Todhunter would be ridden by S. Gregson. Now old Todhunter had already won the Liverpool once, and, in spite of the heavy weight allotted him, was considered by many good judges to have a very fair chance on the present occasion. He was an honest good horse and a favourite with the public, and the public are ever staunch to their old favourites and will back them whenever they think that they have a chance at all. One thing the public a little overlooked in this instance was that Todhunter had changed hands since last year, and another thing they did not know was that the outlays upon him were all their own and that Messrs. Moore and Reubens had not backed him for a shilling. The announcement that Gregson was to be on him did not disturb them much. A few old turfites shook their heads and muttered that it wouldn't do; they might trust the horse but they couldn't the man, he should carry no money of theirs; still the general public forgot Gregson's past iniquities and only remembered that he was a really fine horseman, and at Tattersall's on the following Monday Todhunter was in considerable demand.

Still it was noticeable that there was a strong commission out to back Catamount, in the same stable, and many clever people at once jumped to the conclusion that the young 'un was the better of the two, and backed it accordingly. A very well-known jockey, too, was assigned by the sporting



papers to Catamount, and as one of these crafty backers drily remarked :

"If a horse is to be pulled in favour of his stable companion, Sam Gregson is just the man one would select to do it."

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## CHAPTER X.

### "MESSRS. MOORE AND REUBENS."

IN the smoking-room of a well-known sporting tavern off the Strand, were seated Messrs. Moore and Reubens. They had dined, and apparently dined well. Mr. Moore, who was of a genial disposition, was beaming with satisfaction upon everything around him, while he smoked a cigar of portentous size and blackness.

Mr. Moore liked his tobacco strong, as also his emotions, and was a gambler of the dashing and daring type. Even the saturnine Mr. Reubens relaxed into a smile at some of his companion's sallies. A gambler he, of the cool calculating sort, who never lost his head or suffered himself to be carried away by the enthusiasm of the moment. They made admirable partners, for the dashing impetuosity of the one was held in check by the cool wariness of the other; while Reubens, on the other hand, often won bigger stakes than he otherwise would have done, thanks to the boldness of his confederate. Nothing exemplified the character of the two men more than their behaviour on the bringing off of a big coup.

Moore's hat probably flew high in the air, and he dragged off his friends to immediately, as he termed it, "wet his luck" in champagne. Mr. Reubens, on the contrary, would smile grimly and go off to have sixpenn'orth of whisky and water by himself. Not a popular man, Mr. Reubens, by any means; but punctilious about prompt payment when a loser, that being a necessity of his profession. Moore might break, but, if he did not, would speedily grow rich. Reubens, on the contrary, left to himself, would never have broke, but would have been slow in amassing money.

Such were the two worthies who had set their heads together to win a very big stake over the Liverpool Steeplechase, and who now sat comparing their books and chatting over their prospects.

"What a merry little game it is!" exclaimed Moore, "when we pull the strings and the public dance to 'em! They've backed old Todhunter, as I told you they would, whatever his weight, when we first mapped out this little plant, and we've neither of us ever missed a chance of laying against him. That, of course, is all sure money in our pockets."

"Yes," rejoined Reubens, quietly. "It was a great idea of yours that, to buy Todhunter when we found last year we had such a very smart young 'un in the stable as Catamount. I own I winced at giving twelve hundred for him with all the chances of training to run."

"Yes," replied the other. "And haven't we

pretty well got back that money already? We've laid against him to win us almost that sum; then again, what a trial horse he was for the young 'un! Through him we have got the measure of nearly everything in the race. Old Defiance may prove an awkward customer at the finish, we know; as for the three or four dark ones, this Teetotum that Gregson told us about is the only one likely to prove dangerous."

"Yes," rejoined Reubens. "These Hampshire gentlemen seem to be very sweet, at all events, they've a lot of money put upon her. Considering she has no sort of stable behind her, and is being trained by a farmer, I never saw a mare backed for so much money."

"And all in smallish sums too," replied Moore.

"Yes," said Reubens; "but it looks as if half the County were on her, but we needn't be afraid, she's got a greennorn on her, and there's Sam besides to take care of them if they look dangerous. If Catamount only wins, we shall land a rare good stake.

Could the public have been present at this conference, they would have understood how it was that their pet fancy, Todhunter, kept going back in the market the more he was backed. The ring knew perfectly well that Messrs. Moore and Reubens had not backed the horse for a shilling; that they had also laid against him they did not know, for those gentlemen were too astute to have resort to such operations in public, but they had numerous clients who sent them up commissions to back the horse, and who, of course, were un-

aware whether their commission agent laid them the odds or not; however, despite his retrogression in the betting, the public saw with relief, under the head of sporting intelligence, that Todhunter had arrived at Liverpool, and that in their morning gallops, Messrs. Moore and Reubens' pair looked and went as well as anything amongst the arrivals.

There was quite a commotion at the station on the Wednesday morning, for Joe Bourton, his daughter, Colaton, Mr. Hanway, and quite a party of Bourton's friends were all bound for Liverpool, to see Teetotum win the Grand National. The mare had been boxed under Kitty's superintendence, and had walked into her temporary domicile as quiet as a sheep. Great was the excitement as they skimmed the morning papers, and read about the doings of Teetotum's opponents that had already arrived.

"This Catamount," said Joe, "is like ours, a dark young 'un."

"Only not so good," chimed in Miss Kitty. "I won't believe there is a five-year-old in England that can beat Teetotum."

"Well, you are confident, Miss Bourton," said Mr. Hanway, chuckling.

"Not too confident, Mr. Hanway," replied the girl, gaily, "as you'll see when all is over. I have faith both in the mare and—" she added, dropping her voice so as only to be audible to Dick, "the man."

"You have given me the best proof of that

"We have all faith in the mare," said Mr Hanway, "and have given the best proof men can, by backing her. We all look to you, Mr. Colaton," he continued, laughing; "our fortunes are in your hands."

"I don't believe the mare will fail me," rejoined Dick. "I may find a man too good for me in a close finish, but I've one pull, I've no occasion to carry a whip, so shall have the use of both hands."

"Are you quite sure you won't want it?" replied Hanway.

"Quite; Teetotum is thoroughly honest, and will do her best without."

And now the train glided into the station, the horse box was hitched on, the company scrambled into the carriages, and similar converse whiled away the hours of their journey. Many a reminiscence of past Grand Nationals was narrated, with a tendency to illustrate that the winning of that race by a comparatively unknown horse had been accomplished more than once; and with each case quoted to that effect, the backers of Teetotum seemed to acquire fresh confidence. It certainly did seem somewhat preposterous that men should back an untried mare, who in her single essay at steeplechasing had so wofully disappointed those interested in her, but it was believed the accident that then befell her was one not likely to recur. That she had great speed in the hunting field there could be no doubt, and Colaton declared she had exceptional lasting powers. Then it was notorious that a horse too slow for flat-racing purposes was often metamorphosed into a fast one for steeple-

chasing. Then there was the enthusiasm that always springs up among sporting men for a horse trained in their midst, if they have any grounds for believing it to be a good one; so that, after all, the backers of Teetotum had some excuse for their folly, to say nothing of that ever tempting bait, the procuring of long odds.

On the arrival of the train at Liverpool they were met at the station by Bob Waters. Since Dick's engagement had been made public, Mr. Waters and his wife had been often over to Lowood, Mr. Waters indeed, pretty constantly, with a view to enquiring how Teetotum was going on.

"Here you are at last," he exclaimed, "and the mare with you, of course. She and Catamount are the two great mysteries of the race, and if you can only beat the latter you can't imagine how the bookmakers will halloo!"

"Are they backing her much?" enquired Bourton.

"No, she stands at about twenty to one, and she is constantly ribbled at, but Catamount is first favourite, and I hear Messrs. Moore and Reubens have caught pretty well the whole ring about her, and stand to win an enormous stake. Lots of good judges think old Todhunter could win if he was let, but of course the betting shows clearly that he is to be sacrificed to his stable companion; his mission is to make running, I presume."

"Now, Mr. Colaton, if you'll take care of Kitty, and go on to the hotel, I'll see the mare unboxed and walk down with Thomas to the stables with her."

"Better let Dick and me see her out of her box before we start, father. I've no doubt she'll be quiet enough, but it's no use throwing a chance away."

Teetotum stepped gravely and quietly out of her box when it was opened, and looked round her. She gave a low whinny the moment she caught sight of her young mistress, and obstinately refused to be led on until Kitty had patted her on the neck and spoken to her, and then she paced quietly forward under the guidance of Thomas, with Joe Bourton walking at her side.

But there was another man present at the station who took accurate note of all these proceedings.

"They've got that mare as quiet as a sheep," muttered Sam Gregson. "I always understood she had a bit of a temper, though I'm bound to say whenever I was out with the hounds in Hampshire, I never could see it; however horses are like human beings, ask 'em to do what they like, and who so willing as they? ask 'em to do what they don't like, and they precious soon get their backs up. I dare say that mare enjoys hunting as much as a Christian, and she'll quite likely view Friday's business without the hounds as a very different matter."

At the conclusion of the day's racing, Sam Gregson made his way up to the hotel at which Messrs. Moore and Reubens were staying.

"Well, Gregson," said Mr. Moore, "you did what I told you, I suppose—hung about the station to see if you could pick up anything about this mare of Bourton's?"

"She's here, all right enough," rejoined Sam.

"How she looks I don't know, because I've only seen her in clothes, but I saw Mr. Bourton, and Mr. Colaton, who's to ride her, and a whole lot of Hampshire chaps, and they are all as cock-a-hoop about her chance as ever I saw folks in my life; in fact to hear 'em talk you'd think the race was over."

"All fuss and froth," replied Mr. Moore, "they've got a fast hunter, and think it a wonder. As far as I can make out, they have nothing with which they could have tried it."

"Never mind that," interrupted Reubens, "we've much too big a stake on this to throw the smallest chance away."

"Well," said Sam Gregson, "I don't believe, Mr. Reubens, you need be afraid of this one. I was up at Derby last month, and I managed to get hold of Jenkins, Mr. Colaton's stud groom, and he told me they had her for a week after the steeplechase, and that she was so cowed by the fall, they could do nothing with her. 'Jump,' he said, these were his very words, Mr. Reubens, 'she'll never jump again as long she lives. I managed to flog her over a small fence, but she went up in the air like a sky rocket, and the only wonder was she didn't come down in the same place.' Still, in spite of all that, I saw her jump well enough with the hounds in Hampshire."

"I don't like it," observed Mr. Reubens, meditatively, "I've a sort of conviction, this Teetotum's going to bring us to grief."

"What an old croaker you are!" said Moore. "There's nothing to be afraid of; we've tried Cata-mout high enough to beat her fair and square."



"Fair and square," ejaculated Mr. Reubens. "I wish there was a way of squaring her; eh, Sam?" and Mr. Reubens looked meaningly at the jockey.

"No," said Gregson, "I don't suppose there is anything to be done in that way; still, it is curious they've stabled their mare at the same place, and in the same range of boxes, as our horses."

"You don't say so!" said Moore. "Possibly, Sam, you might get into the wrong box to-night for a few minutes."

"That's a mighty risky business, and one that I don't care about chancing. Why, if I was even caught trying the lock, it 'ud be the ruin of me. There's been plenty of things said against me before, though I was innocent as a baby, and if I was only found loitering near the door, they'd say I wanted to poison her, or some such nonsense. I'm most afeard to go near our own horses for fear of their saying ugly things about me."

A grin passed over Mr. Moore's face, as he listened to the plaint of this injured innocent.

"I understand, Sam," he said. "Anything we like in the race, but you're not good to play tricks in the stable."

"That's it, sir, that's it," rejoined Gregson. "It's too risky, gentlemen, indeed it is."

"It's a pity," remarked Mr. Reubens, slowly. "You see, there's a safety in a horse you're afraid of being in the stable when the numbers go up. Your mind is quite easy about him when you see he don't start; I'd give a pony to be sure Teetotum didn't start to-morrow."

## CHAPTER XL.

### BOB WATERS GETS ANXIOUS.

SAM GREGSON, as he walked away after his interview with his employers, pondered a good deal over Mr. Reubens' last remark. Yes, there was no doubt about it, a horse could not win if it did not start. If he did get a chance to slip into Teetotum's box, two or three taps on the leg would settle her chance, and instinct seemed to tell him that, reason as he might, granting that the mare was nervous, frightened, and would not jump, that Colaton was an inexperienced horseman and certain to get flurried when it came to racing, yet, for all that, he could not get away from the idea that Teetotum would turn out one of the most formidable opponents of Catamount on the Friday.

He wanted money badly—he had not been engaged in a profitable piece of rascality for some time, for malpractices on the part of a man in his profession carry their own punishment, insomuch as, when deemed guilty of them, opportunities for further robbery wax scarce. The butler held guilty of stealing the plate finds difficulty in getting another plate-chest entrusted to him. He was determined to make a good thing out of this race; it might be many a long day before he had such another chance, and then again if he served Messrs. Moore and Reubens faithfully upon this occasion he would have established some claim upon those

gentlemen for employment in the future, and that was a thing he had had some difficulty in getting of late; and yet force his way into Teetotum's box he felt he dared not; however, it seemed a pity to throw away all chance of twenty-five pounds, and there could be no harm in just taking a turn round the yard late in the evening and seeing how the land lay.

They were a very merry party of four, at a snug corner table in the coffee-room of the Adelphi, consisting of Bourton and his daughter, Dick Colaton, and Bob Waters, though as far as poor Dick was concerned it was rather a Barmecide's feast.

He had been at no little trouble to reduce his weight lately so as to ride Teetotum the exact ten stone four allotted to her, for there had been much perturbation at Lowood some weeks ago, when upon getting into the scales it had been discovered that he was a trifle over that without his saddle. However, his spirits were of the best, though he had to be abstemious in the matter of both food and champagne, and tossed off one of the two glasses he allowed himself to Teetotum's victory.

Kitty alone of all the party did not quite rise to the occasion. The girl could not help being a little distrait at times. The memory of all the bad accidents in the hunting-field she had ever heard of would obtrude themselves upon her mind. Her lover might rally her, call her a little wet blanket, and say that she ought to be ashamed of herself for thinking that Teetotum could do anything but win; but all the same, the vision of a

man ghastly pale and senseless, brought back upon a hurdle, would ever and anon rise before her eyes.

It was all nonsense, of course. She had hunted since she was a little girl, had seen, experienced and laughed at many a tumble, and had had the good fortune never to witness a bad fall. That there was danger to Dick Colaton in riding a steeple-chase had never occurred to her in the first instance; she would just as soon have thought there was danger to him in a day's hunting, but then he was not her lover, nor was she engaged to marry him. She did know the Grand National was usually run at a great pace, that there were often a good many spills, and that there had been some one or two fatal accidents.

She could not but bear in mind that it was she who had urged him to do this thing, and that, but for her, Dick would not have been among the silken-jacketed horsemen of Friday. Colaton divined her thoughts.

"What a foolish Kitty it is," he said, in a low tone, "as for your thinking that I am likely to come to terrible grief, it is all nonsense. We should never get on a horse at all if we always had that on our mind. Did not Sir Robert Peel meet his death while cantering up Constitution Hill; did not poor Whyte Melville come to his doom while galloping across an open field; and did not the Marquis of Waterford go to his long home through his horse blundering over a fence he could have hopped over? Pooh! Kitty, people are knocked down and killed in crossing a street. I've promised you this shall be my last ride between the flags. Mind, I shall

expect you to wear a bright face and your prettiest bonnet both to-morrow and next day. By-the-bye," continued Dick, raising his voice, "you'll get up and see me gallop Teetotum to-morrow, won't you, Kitty?"

"See you gallop Teetotum!" exclaimed Bob Waters; "I should think so. Half Hampshire will be there to-morrow to see the mare do her last canter. Some of them won't like the looks of it when they see her, but, in the meantime, I vote we go to the play. It's our duty to keep our jockey amused, and we can't sit here drinking Teetotum's health all night."

"By all means," said Dick; "that'll be the very thing. Run and get your hat, Kitty, while I get a fly. I only hope we shall be able to get places."

In expressing a doubt on this subject Dick was quite right, for Liverpool was always very full during the race week, and the theatres in consequence crowded. Still, fortunately for them, they were early diners, and consequently got down to the theatre in good time, and succeeded in obtaining a tolerable box. It was a good piece, played by a good company, and in the interest of the representation Kitty forgot her fears, and they were all soon laughing heartily, still, the restless Bob Waters could not altogether abstract his mind from what he called the business in hand, to wit, the winning of the Grand National. Ever since he had heard what Gregson had said down in Hampshire, he had been firmly convinced that Teetotum would meet with foul play at Liverpool. Once or twice he disturbed Joe Bourton's enjoyment of the performance

by whispering in his ear, "Do you think it's quite prudent to leave the mare there by herself so long without visiting her?"

"Oh, she's right enough," replied Bourton, "Thomas is there with her, with instructions never to leave her."

"Just so," replied Waters. "Thomas is a most worthy fellow and an excellent groom, but as you know there's always a tap in the vicinity of a stable, and there never was a groom yet who could withstand the temptation of beer."

"I can trust Thomas," retorted Bourton, "he's as steady as old Time when on duty, and when he's off," he continued with a chuckle, "they'll find Thomas rather an expensive customer to deal with. I'm blessed if I don't think he could finish a nine-gallon cask without turning a hair."

"There it is, there it is," replied Waters. "Of course, you can't trust a man like that."

"That I can," replied Bourton, "he's more mad his mare should win the Liverpool than even you or I are. Mighty little ale will pass his lips till tomorrow's over, and then, if it comes off, Mr. Waters, I reckon Thomas will put in about the biggest 'beer' on record."

"But all the same," said Waters, rising, "there can't be any harm in my taking a turn up to the stables."

"Not at all," said Bourton. "I am coming up there myself after the play, but don't go fidgetting into the box. She's a nervous mare, and the strange stable is like enough to upset her a little without disturbing her besides."

Mr. Waters put on his hat and coat, and without more ado, made the best of his way to the stables. The yard was at this time well nigh deserted. Now and again a man came out of the tap-room which opened into it, and made his way thence into the street. Mr. Waters was not a little surprised that he could see nothing of the trusty Thomas. However, after a bit, he caught sight of a couple of men lounging in front of some loose boxes, a little lower down; one of them came smartly towards him, looked at him keenly, and then passed into the tap-room, the other, on the contrary, still continued to lounge about the yard smoking. Mr. Waters conceived all this to be highly suspicious. The first man was a stranger to him, he determined to have a look at the second; he walked sharply towards him, and as he came up to him, recognised Gregson.

"What the deuce are you doing here?" ejaculated Mr. Waters, sharply.

"Well, if it comes to that," replied the other, rather insolently, "what are you doing here? One might think you wanted to see if Catamount's box was open?"

"You scoundrel!" exclaimed Waters, "how dare you say such things?"

"Well," returned Gregson, coolly, "I'm here to look after our horses, whether you've any authority to look after Mr. Bourton's, I don't know; anyhow, we don't want you fiddling round our boxes."

"I've a great mind to break every bone in your skin," replied Waters, fiercely.

"No you won't, Squire," sneered Gregson, "if

you did, they would say, not being able to nobble the horse, you had nobbled the jockey."

"You thundering thief!" said Waters, between his set teeth, but at the same time recognising the truth contained in the grinning jockey's remark.

It was quite true; he had no valid pretext for assaulting Gregson, while it would be quite open for people to say that he had wilfully disabled the jockey at the last moment, so as to leave Messrs. Moore and Reubens without a rider for Todhunter.

"I'll settle with you when the race is over," he continued, and turning on his heel walked sharply up the yard.

"Yes," muttered Gregson, as he looked after him, "it's likely enough, Mr. Waters, you and your lot will have a pretty full account against me then; but I shan't be such a fool as to put myself in your way, and give you a chance of settling it."

As Waters reached the top of the yard, he met Joe Bourton.

"It's all very well," he remarked, "but it's high time you came down here. There's not a sign of Thomas, and there's that fellow Gregson hanging about your stable."

"Don't you fuss yourself," replied Bourton, "It's all right, I'll pound it. Come along, I'll show you where to find Thomas," and Bourton made his way to the small stable, consisting of a loose box and a couple of stalls which had been set apart for him. He knocked sharply at the door once or twice, and then, to Waters' astonishment, it was quietly opened by Thomas, and they both entered the stable.

"Mare all right?" enquired Bourton.



"Quite, sir," replied the groom. "She is a queer thing, and all'ays pines for company in a strange place. She fidgetted a little at first, but she's quiet enough now I've come to sleep in the stable."

"That's well, have her down at the race-course by eight o'clock to-morrow. Mr. Colaton will give her a bit of a gallop. Good-night."

"Good-night, sir," replied Thomas, as he closed the door, and once more locked himself in with his charge.

"There," said Bourton, as they walked back to the hotel. "Don't you think Thomas is to be trusted now? I reckon neither Gregson nor anybody else will try to meddle with the mare while he is there."

Mr. Waters made no reply, but betook himself to his bed, much comforted.

There was quite a little crowd on Liverpool race-course a little after eight the next morning, to see the competitors for the big race of the next day. Most of these were present, and did more or less work as seemed good in the eyes of their respective trainers.

Messrs. Moore and Reubens' pair, as might be expected, came in for the lion's share of attention. Old Todhunter was pronounced to look wonderfully well, and, as he took a good half-speed gallop with Gregson in the saddle, many good judges said that, in spite of the weight, the old horse would be very bad to beat the next day.

"I'll tell you what it is," said a veteran sportsman whose memory travelled back over many Grand Nationals, "if Defiance, whom I haven't seen yet, is

only as well as Todhunter, then upon the public form, in my opinion, it should be a match between the two old 'uns; but then of course we've got to consider these three or four dark horses. Now if Catamount is better at the weights than Todhunter, it should, bar accidents, be all over but shouting. There's a good deal of uncertainty about steeplechasing, but this seems a good thing for the favorite, if ever there was one."

"So his owners seem to think, by the way the money has gone down upon him. I am told that Messrs. Moore and Reubens will win about the biggest stake that ever was landed over a Grand National if Catamount wins. Ah! here he comes; what do you think of him?"

As he spoke, a chestnut horse with a white blaze on his face swept past them.

"A very pretty mover," replied the first speaker, "and fit as hands could make him. He's rather light and wants substance. I should doubt his having stamina to get hard upon five miles. What's this coming? By Jove, that's a rare mover!"

"That's Teetotum," replied his friend, "and it's whispered that she is the most dangerous outsider in the race. The Hampshire people are all wild about her. She never ran but once, and then she turned the turtle. There is quite a romantic story about her; they say she has been taught to jump by her owner's daughter, and that for a long time nobody else could do anything with her, but she'll go now for that young fellow who's been riding her this morning; and if he wins to-morrow he is to have the girl's hand for his riding fee."

“Quite a romance in three volumes,” laughed the other, “I’m too old to fool money away now, but as a young one, I’d have had a tenner on that, just for the romance of the thing. However, we’ve seen ’em all go now, and may as well get home to breakfast. I don’t fancy the favourite, and if old Todhunter isn’t sacrificed to his stable companion, shall expect to see him returned the winner. If they cut his throat by making running for Catamount, well, then I should say, if old Defiance don’t win, anything might.”

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## CHAPTER XII.

“YOURS WINS, FOR A THOUSAND!”

A BRIGHT sun and a bitter nor'-easter heralded in the morning of the Grand National. “Seasonable weather, sir!” “Fine bracing morning!” Such were the greetings exchanged by the crowd as they tumbled out from all parts of England at the Liverpool stations. The burly Yorkshire men were there in force, and a strong contingent from Lincolnshire had flocked to the banks of the Mersey. Sheffield had poured forth its hundreds, and the specials from Birmingham and London were filed to overflowing. All these men liked a race; but to some of them there was no race run in the kingdom like that tough tussle over that half-real, half-artificial four to five miles of country that took place every March at Liverpool. They swarmed into the town ravenous for something to eat, and their appetite once ap-

peased, poured forth on every description of conveyance from shanks' mare to four-horse breaks, to the scene of the tourney. Long before the hour appointed for racing to begin, the course was covered with spectators; the stand, perhaps, had not as yet filled up; but the betting ring was swelling rapidly. Round Beecher's Brook, Valentine's Brook and other points of vantage, the country folks crowded like bees, making hearty *al fresco* meals off cold meat or bread and cheese, and passing hospitably amongst themselves flat stone bottles of beer or strong waters.

Kitty comes down that morning in her bravest array, and trying to put on her bravest and sunniest face. She is not naturally nervous, but she is strung to such a pitch of tension on this occasion, that she has the greatest difficulty in concealing how terribly shaken her nerves are. She has passed a sleepless night, and only that her lover was pre-occupied in thinking over the business before him, and discussing over and over again with Joe Bourton and Bob Waters what would be his best tactics in the race, Dick must have noticed it; but the girl pulls herself together in the marvellous way women do under such pressure, and though she looks very pale, she is outwardly calm and smiling. How she wishes it was all over. She feels now as if she cared little what won if she only knew that her Dick was unhurt. Still she feels it would never do to show that; she must continue to display the greatest anxiety for Teetotum's success, and pretend to think that an accident to Dick is not to be thought of.

It had been agreed that they should get down to the course in good time. Mr. Waters was anxious to know how things were going in the betting ring. Joe Bourton thought he should like to take thorough stock of all the competitors before the race, and they all agreed that it was necessary they should be established in their seats comfortably before the preliminary business of saddling etc. took place for the Grand National.

"Needn't stick to 'em, you know," said Bob Waters; "but we can just leave an odd wrap or two in our stalls to show they are appropriated."

"Well, Mr. Bourton," said Dick, "we can never make the mare more fit than she is now, and if she'll only run with me to-day as she has gone with me in Hampshire, if we are beat it will be simply because we're not good enough."

"Beat!" ejaculated the impetuous Waters. "Don't talk of such a thing, why I expect to see your mare win in the commonest of canters; but mind you, Dick, keep your eye on that beggar Gregson, that precious scoundrel means mischief of some sort. I don't know what, but I believe the thief to be capable of any enormity."

The Babel of the betting ring had already commenced when they arrived on the course. The clear March air was resonant with the fierce war cry of the fielders: "the Liverpool Steeplechase, I'll bet upon, here's five to one against the favourite," "long odds some of these outsiders," and similar cries rang sharp and shrill in their ears as they went up to their places on the stand.

"Having duly taken possession of their stalls,

Waters announced his intention of going down into the betting ring, leaving Dick and Kitty for the present to themselves; though it was agreed that the latter should come down with Dick, and see Teetotum saddled when the time came. As for Joe Bourton, he had gone direct to the saddling paddock, where he was speedily laughing and joking with Mr. Hanway and a lot more of his Hampshire friends.

“She went better, Mr. Bourton, she did, indeed, sir, than anything I saw out this morning. As for that Catamount, Teetotum beats him whatever wins, if ever looks are to be any guide to horse-flesh. A jumped-off rat of a horse I call him. Well in? Why he has got just the same weight as our mare, and, whereas she looks as if she could carry another stone without inconvenience, that brute looks as if he had quite enough to do to carry his saddle round the course with nobody in it.”

Catamount was by no means so bad a looking horse as Mr. Hanway made him out, but when men have backed a horse in a race it is only natural that they should have a tendency to pick holes in those that promise to be his most dangerous rivals. Catamount was undoubtedly rather a light horse, one that would give but little promise of doing well under a heavy weight, or if the ground were deep, but he was not called upon to combat either of those conditions, and as the veteran sportsman who, commenting on his gallop on the previous morning, had liked him little better than Mr. Hanway had, still said, that with such a trial horse as old Tod-

hunter in the stable, the openly expressed opinion of Messrs. Moore and Reubens as to his chance was entitled to be regarded with much respect. Grievous mistakes are no doubt made at times in trials, but the race usually shows that the majority of them have been tolerably correct.

"Well, you see, Mr. Hanway," said Joe Bourton, "they run in all sorts of shapes, and though, if it came to a matter of looks, I'd back any judge to give it to mine easy, it is just possible that we may find this Catamount a very tough customer to tackle. I looked at him this morning. There's no mistake about it; he's trained to the day."

"Yes," said another of the group, "and Jackson, whom they've got to ride, is a steady, good man, who knows his way over this course well."

"I can only say," said Bourton, "that I am afraid of nothing, and if it don't come off, at all events I think you'll have a rare good run for your money."

In the betting-ring meanwhile, speculation grew fast and furious. Five to one about Catamount was obtainable with difficulty, and in several cases backers put up with a point less. The next in popular estimation was Defiance, whose own immediate party, followed by a considerable section of the public, were placing their money upon him.

"I stand him," said a well-known follower of the stable, "because they've been ringing the changes on those two horses, Todhunter and Catamount, and the chances are they'll mess the race away. I believe they could win with the old horse, but they're going to try and win with the young one, and will so put Todhunter's chance out."

But for all that, the public still clung to their old favourite, and Todhunter had a considerable number of supporters. Somewhat to Mr. Waters' surprise, he found that Teetotum had crept rapidly forward in the betting. This was due to two reasons: firstly, she had pleased the cognoscenti very much in her gallop of yesterday morning, and, secondly, that story about her, trained by and entered at the desire of her owner's daughter, had by this become widely circulated. In fact, the "lady's mare," as they dubbed her, was whispered about as quite the good thing of the race. It was just one of those stories that catch the popular mind, and many a stout north-countryman or hard-headed farmer from the eastern counties who was a little puzzled as to making up his mind about what to back, finally resolved to have just "a poond or two on that Teetotum." In the ladies' gallery, too, this tale of "a ride for a bride" excited great interest, and many of them insisted on their male belongings immediately investing on Teetotum in their behalf. Considerable curiosity was manifested to see Miss Bourton, but in this at present they were not destined to be gratified, for although Kitty was sitting but little way off many of those ladies who were anxious to see her, she was utterly unknown, and there was consequently no one to point her out.

The two preliminary races are over, and then Dick whispers to her:

"Come along, Kitty, you must come down to give Teetotum a last pat, and see me fairly into the saddle."



The girl rose in reply to his remark, followed him silently down the staircase, and then, taking his arm, the pair made their way across to the paddock. There were a good many people collected there when they entered it, but they had very little difficulty in finding the group of which they were in search, and having handed his *fiancée* over to her father, Dick made the best of his way back to the stand for the purpose of weighing-out. Hardly had he left them when Mr. Waters turned up fresh from the betting-ring.

"Tell you what it is, Mr. Bourton; there's a lot of people over there backing our mare. They've brought her to ten to one, and I've just hardened my heart and put another tenner on her."

"Well, that shows confidence up to the last moment," rejoined Bourton. "We shall soon know now if she is as good as we think she is."

Kitty had by this left her father and was walking by the side of Teetotum. The mare turned her head and greeted her young mistress with a low whinny of recognition.

But soon the rumour spread through the paddock that the fairy who had transformed a bad race-horse, and a hopeless cross-country performer, into a candidate for Liverpool honours, was there herself to look after the saddling of her charge. Quickly the giddy crowd thronged down to see Teetotum, and look at this girl who had caused such a metamorphosis. Most of them pictured to themselves a stern hard-featured masculine young woman, judge their surprise when they saw walking by Teetotum's side a very pretty, quietly dressed girl, with downcast

eyes and most modest demeanour, who seemed painfully conscious of the attention she was attracting.

In good truth, Kitty by no means liked the situation. She comforted herself with the reflection that it would be all over in a quarter of an hour or so, and she resolved to be brave for Dick's sake. They both held it essential that she should pet and soothe the mare till the last moment, and if Dick was not afraid to ride, why should she blench because these people stared at her? She was perfectly unaware of the somewhat exaggerated story afloat about her, and supposed that it was simply unusual for a woman to take part in a race-horse's toilet. All unconscious on her part, her appearance roused considerable enthusiasm about "the lady's mare," and many of the spectators, as they bustled back to the stand to see the race, vowed they would have just a little bet on Teetotum "just for the fun of the thing, you know."

It was not that, although they chose to call it so, it was just that dash of romance that lies at the bottom of the heart of every man or woman worthy the name. There is no nation in the world so chary about exposing their emotions as ourselves, for whatever he may feel, an Englishman is wondrous shy about exposing his feelings, but here was an occasion upon which any man could give free scope to them. He might back Teetotum, and who was to say the reason why? perchance he fancied the name; perchance he fancied her looks; perchance he backed her because he didn't know what else to back, but no one could accuse him of being such a fool as to wager money on a pure matter of senti-

ment, and yet a good many of that crowd when they rushed back from the paddock did so, simply because they had seen a pretty girl standing at Teetotum's head, and had heard a romantic story connected with her.

Dick comes back, having "weighed-out" all right, and the mare greets him as she does her young mistress with a slight whinny of recognition; another minute, and Joe Bourton has thrown him into the saddle, and Teetotum is pacing slowly towards the exit from the paddock, with Kitty still walking by her side. Arrived there, she stops and says in low tones as she pats Teetotum's neck:

"Good-bye, Dick, and God speed you. She has told me as well as she can that she will be good. God send you safe back to me, my darling."

Dick's sole reply was to bend forward and kiss the hand extended to him, and then he joined his companions preparatory to pacing past the stand in Indian file. Joe Bourton and Waters immediately took possession of Kitty, and hurried back to gain their seats in the Grand Stand.

No need for any last words to Dick. Had they not all discussed how the race should be run, as far as he was concerned, over and over again? Nothing left now but to see the upshot of it.

The preliminary canter was soon over, and during it many a race glass was levelled at the good-looking young fellow in the orange jacket and black cap, who was the hero of this romantic story. Teetotum was perfectly cool and well behaved during this prologue to the great drama about to be enacted, jumping the hurdles in her canter in

faultless fashion, and betraying no sign of nervousness. By this time people had poured back from the paddock, and Miss Bourton's personality had become more widely known, and a good many looks and glasses were levelled in her direction. But Kitty was too much absorbed in her own feelings to observe the notice she attracted. A few minutes more, and a shout from the carriages next the road proclaimed that the competitors for the Grand National had started on their journey; another minute, and leaving the Sefton Arms Hotel well behind them, they emerge on to the flat, and crossing the road, stream down towards the first fence, a pink jacket leading.

"That's Pullaway in front," cried Bob Waters, "and that's Defiance in the light blue jacket lying next, but they're all in cluster at present, though I don't suppose they'll be so long."

"Dick's lying nearly last, is he not?" said Kitty, whose hand shook so she could hardly use her glasses.

"Yes," replied her father, "that's our orange jacket lying pretty well last of everything, but you know we settled he should ride the race that way. He was to be very careful not to flurry the mare till she had thoroughly settled down to her work."

On they went pretty well all together till they came to Beecher's Brook, where one of the twenty-two competitors blundered and was left behind. Once round the turn, the rider of Pullaway took advantage of his lead and made the pace pretty strong down the straight stretch on the far side of the course, his immediate attendants being a horse

called Gamecock, and two or three others, the names of which are not necessary to this story. Next in order came the sky-blue jacket of Defiance, and the crimson sleeves and black cap of old Todhunter; some couple of lengths behind him came Cata-mount, distinguished from his stable companion by his rider wearing a red cap, and lying comfortably at the head of the ruck, while positively last of all, although not in the least tailed off, was the orange banner in which alone Kitty felt interested.

"It's all right," said Bourton, "she is fencing beautifully with him. He has plenty of time to catch the leaders between this and home—they have a very long way to go yet."

And now they cross Valentine's Brook and make the turn down the canal side, and as they do so Dick Colaton begins to feel sanguine of success. His great anxiety is so far allayed, that Teetotum discovers no sign of nervousness, but sails away with him as she was wont over the Hampshire Downs at the tail of the Tedworth. She has made nothing of any of the fences, and Dick, who walked all over the course the day before, knew that unless it was the brook in front of the stand, she would now meet nothing likely to upset her nervous temperament. As they came down the canal side he ventured to take closer order with his companions. Jackson, who was riding the favourite, seemed also in no hurry to take his horse to the front, and was contenting himself at present with holding a good position in the ruck. And now leaving the canal they turn their heads for home, and come down

the brook opposite the stand, into which Pullaway plumps incontinently and unships his jockey, one or two of his attendants also blunder at it and, though not placed *hors de combat*, lose a considerable lot of ground before they can be set going again. This left Gamecock with a somewhat commanding lead, but his rider was a wary old horseman and was not going to be tempted to drive his horse to a standstill because the fates had proved kind to him. The two veterans, Defiance and Todhunter, took the brook almost side by side and now went steadily on in pursuit of Gamecock.

The enthusiasm of the stand was thoroughly roused as the two *débutants* came down to make their first real public essay at water. Catamount led a good two lengths. He might be light looking, but at the present moment he looked like galloping on, and coming down to the brook without a sign of a refusal, flew it cleverly.

"Now, old woman," cried Dick, as he followed suit, and Teetotum cocked her ears, quickened her stride, and, as Dick said afterwards, went at it as if she had been jerked out of a catapult. "Over, old lady," muttered Dick as he pulled his mare together and patted her on the neck. "I should think you were, but remember another time, it isn't the canal you've got to jump. I wonder how many feet you did cover?"

There was quite a little cheer followed Teetotum and her rider from the spectators near the brook as they continued their way alongside the racecourse. As they turned into the country again, Defiance and Todhunter had closed considerably upon Game-

cock. Catamount was at the head of the next cluster, now considerably reduced, while Dick Colaton was lying second. Gamecock maintained his lead till they had once more crossed Beecher's Brook, and then it was evident to the experienced eyes of Sam Gregson and the rider of Defiance that his bolt was shot, and the former worthy began to think it was high time that he did something in the interests of Catamount, and without more ado, he took his horse to the front. The rider of Defiance was bothered; at this stage of the race, he dared not let such a dangerous opponent get away from him, and yet at the same time he was quite aware that supposing he raced successfully with this adversary he would very likely be called upon to tackle the favourite a little later. He reckoned the whole thing up quickly in his head, and came to the conclusion that he would settle Todhunter at once, and trust to there being nothing able to get to him afterwards. The tactics were ingenious in theory, but in practice they rather failed, as, unfortunately, just before they came to Valentine's Brook he became conscious that Sam Gregson had settled him.

Gregson had been too much occupied in the demolition of Defiance to take note of what was passing behind him, and when, after jumping Valentine's Brook, he threw a glance backwards, he was astonished to find Teetotum at his heels. While Gregson had been engaged in galloping down Defiance, Dick Colaton had run boldly up to Catamount, and in a few strides not only deprived him of the lead, but convinced himself that he had the favourite at his mercy. For a second Gregson

was staggered at the turn things had taken, but the superb scoundrel speedily rose to the situation. He already recognised that bar accidents Teetotum would probably win; at all events, he thought Catamount could not. As before said, he had determined to make money out of this race somehow. His two hundred pounds was contingent on Catamount's winning, and that he thought was now very doubtful. A bold conception struck him; this young Mr. Colaton no doubt stood to win a good stake on his mount, and was probably thirsting for the honour and glory of winning the Liverpool. As Dick came alongside of him, he said. "Well, Mr. Colaton, strikes me there's only you and I left in it. I'll have a cross bet with you, if you like. *Yours beats mine, for a thousand!*"

For a moment Dick failed to recognise the villainy of this proposal, and then it dawned upon him that the irreclaimable blackguard galloping alongside of him, was offering to pull his horse for that sum.

"No thank you," replied Dick. "I'll win on the square, or not at all."

And now they turned into the flat, jumping the flight of hurdles at the bend side by side.

"There's only three in it!" screamed Waters excitedly, "and our mare is one of 'em. Come on, Teetotum! only, now, one flight of hurdles between you and the winning post!"

Dick and Gregson were now coming along side by side, watching each other like two cats, but neither had yet begun riding. Three lengths off was the favourite, whom Jackson was carefully nursing for a final effort, though feeling that unless the un-



expected happened to the two leaders, there was no chance of his winning. At least half a score of lengths behind came Defiance.

“A born fool!” muttered Gregson. “Why couldn’t he pay that thousand pounds? Now I shall have to jeopardise both our necks.”

The minute he was over the last hurdle, Dick had made up his mind to come right away; his crafty antagonist had already divined that, and as they came towards it, Dick suddenly became conscious that Gregson was boring in upon him.

“Damnation! ride your own line,” he roared.

“I can’t help it,” shouted Gregson back again, and as they took off, Gregson deliberately pulled his horse right across Colaton. A collision in the air was the consequence, and from the Stand arose a shout of “They’re both down!” At the same time a woman’s shriek was heard, and Kitty Bourton fainted.

“By heavens!” cried Waters, “and there’s the favourite down too!” and as he spoke, Catamount, dead beat, fell over the last hurdle, just when Messrs. Moore and Reubens considered their money in their pockets.

However, it so happened that the first cry from the Stand of “They’re both down!” was not quite the case. Todhunter and Sam Gregson undoubtedly were down, and Teetotum, owing to the cannon, had jumped the hurdle sideways, and blundered on to her knees, but Dick had managed to keep his seat, and by a desperate effort just kept her off the rails and succeeded in setting her going again. He felt something give way in his arm as he did so, and in

another second his right hand hung motionless by his side. Had there been anything within hail of him, Dick must have been beaten, and as it was a roar came from the Stand, "Old Defiance wins, after all!" The jockey of that horse, when he saw all the front rank go down like a house of cards, very naturally thought that, beaten as his horse was, he had a chance of winning. He got safely over the last hurdle, and riding his horse desperately, it became a very fine point whether he wouldn't even now catch Dick before he could reach the winning-post, but fortune favoured the latter, and though the distance never allowed Teetotum to get fairly into her stride again, she managed to scramble past the winning-post, a bare length to the good.

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### CONCLUSION.

KITTY'S companions had been so absorbed in the race that they had paid little attention to her, and therefore not had noticed how ghastly pale the girl had been ever since it commenced. Her scream, however, made them turn towards her. She had fallen back in her seat and was white to the very lips. "Teetotum wins! Teetotum wins! Teetotum has won!" burst from hundreds of mouths, and in another minute the mare's number was satisfactorily hoisted with that of Defiance under it. Joe Bourton, between the glory of having won the Liverpool, and dismay at his daughter's prostration, was for the minute fairly

dazed, but Mr. Waters was quite equal to the occasion.

“Get down as fast as you can, man, and lead your mare in; never mind Miss Bourton, leave me to take care of her. She has only fainted, and will be as jolly as a sandboy, as soon as she comes to and I’ve made her understand that her sweetheart has won the Liverpool and not broken his neck. I’ll get her into a carriage at the back of the Stand, as soon as I can, and we’ll wait there till you and Colaton come to us.”

Bourton felt that there was sense in Mr. Waters’ advice, and accordingly hurried off to lead in the winner of the Grand National. Dick looked very pale when Bourton at last got hold of Teetotum’s bridle. His mouth twitched a little, and his right arm still hung powerless by his side.

“It’s all right!” he exclaimed, as he jumped off, and with his left hand and teeth proceeded to remove Teetotum’s saddle. “I just got home, and now, as soon as I’ve weighed-in, I’ll be off to the Hotel. I don’t know what’s wrong, but I feel as if everything was smashed in this arm. It’s lucky, at all events, that I don’t want it any more to-day, for I’ve lost all use of it.”

Without more ado, Dick got into the scales, and, as soon as the “all right,” was pronounced, he threw his great coat over his shoulders, and, accompanied by Bourton, made his way to the back of the Stand.

Mr. Waters was as good as his word; but, no sooner was the race over and his neighbours on the Stand became aware of what had happened, than he

received any amount of assistance; cold water and a tumbler, and more than one friendly flask were proffered him, and in a very few minutes Kitty recovered herself sufficiently to sit up, gulp some cold water, wonder how she could have been so foolish, and with a sickly smile, essayed to speak.

"Sit quiet for a few minutes more," said Waters authoritatively. "Dick is all right, and has won the Liverpool. Now just drink this glass of sherry and then you and I will go off and congratulate him."

By this time the people in her vicinity had become aware that the lady who had fainted, was the Miss Bourton whose father had just won the big race, and that she had swooned upon seeing her lover, as she thought, get a terribly bad fall at the last hurdle. She found herself, much to her confusion, an object of the greatest interest, as she made her way out of the Stand, leaning on Bob Waters' arm. To get hold of their own carriage proved impracticable; but Waters had no difficulty in catching a fly, into which he and Kitty at once got, to wait till Dick and Bourton should join them. A very few minutes, and they were seen making their way through the throng, and Waters eagerly hailed them; but a glance showed Kitty that there was something wrong. Dick would have had his coat on instead of only thrown over his shoulders, if there had not been something the matter; still, as he was able to walk, the girl comforted herself with the reflection that, whatever his injuries, they could not be of an alarming description.

"All right?" exclaimed Waters excitedly.

"Yes," rejoined Bourton, "all right as far as the race is concerned, but I am afraid Dick has hurt his arm badly."

"Don't look frightened, Kitty," exclaimed Colaton, "I've won the Liverpool, and have promised you 'never to do so no more.' I *have* hurt the arm, and am in considerable pain just now, but I am pretty sure it's nothing serious, and that a doctor will very soon put it to rights."

"Oh! Dick, my dear," exclaimed the girl, "I thought you were killed at that last hurdle. I've been very stupid, and a great trouble to Mr. Waters, I am sure."

"Not a bit," exclaimed that gentleman, "but the first thing we have got to do now is just to put that arm in a sling," and producing a large silk handkerchief from the pocket of his overcoat, Mr. Waters, with Kitty's assistance, soon manufactured a sling and got Colaton's arm into it.

"There," he said at last, "that's easier, isn't it? Takes its own weight off it, you see, and now the sooner you get back to Liverpool and send for a surgeon the better. You needn't come unless you like, Bourton. I'm going to look after Dick. Strikes me these young people ain't quite able to take care of themselves to-day."

However, Bourton decided that he could depend upon Thomas to bring home Teetotum all safe, as soon as she had cooled down a bit and recovered herself, and that there was nothing further he cared

Such a sensational finish to a Grand National had perhaps never been witnessed. Mr. Gregson's foul riding had been quite comprehended by many people in the Stand, and it was well for him that he was picked up insensible and carried away under the impression that he was badly hurt. In reality the scoundrel, though stunned for the moment, had come out of this *mêlée* of his own making very little the worse for the fall. He was purposely rather slow coming round, and gathered from the comments about him that the tide of popular feeling had set somewhat against him.

He rightly determined not to court publicity, and as soon as he had changed his clothes, and fortified himself with a copious libation of brandy and water, stole back to Liverpool in unostentatious fashion, with the sickening sensation that, in spite of all his chicanery, he had benefited nothing by the race. The general verdict was that, but for the collision at the last hurdle, it would have been a capital race between old Todhunter and the winner, while the rider of Defiance, to the day of his death, always lamented that he threw away the chance of victory.

"Mine was fairly done with, but if I could have foreseen that the three in front of me were all going to blunder at the last hurdle, I could have been a bit nearer to take advantage of their trouble, and if I had been, I should have just won."

But for those ifs the material events of this world would many a time have been much altered.

Messrs. Moore and Reubens in all their racing career had never experienced such a disaster as this.

They had played for a great stake, and seen it apparently within their reach. Beaten though Catamount undoubtedly was, had he only got safely over the last hurdle Sam Gregson's desperate expedient would have given him the race. As it was, although recognising that their emissary had done his best, they were in no disposition to be generous; they were too hard hit themselves to dispense money with a free hand, and there were sinister rumours that they would never meet their liabilities. Thanks, however, to the consideration and to some extent the assistance of their brethren, they did manage to weather the blackest Monday they had ever encountered, but their speculations were crippled, and conducted on a much more limited scale for many a long day.

Sam Gregson vanished into the obscurity and poverty that usually befalls a jockey who turns an arrant thief; in much disrepute before, his shameful foul riding in the Grand National put a practical finish to his career, and he lapsed into a mere hanger-on of the racecourse picking up a precarious living as he best could.

Dick Colaton's arm proved a much more serious thing than was at first anticipated. No bones were broken, but in the desperate effort he had made to keep Teetotum on her legs, the muscles had been most fearfully wrenched. He suffered great pain in it for weeks, and it was months before the doctors allowed him to use the injured limb again; but Kitty made a most unwearied nurse, and Bob Waters declared that he never saw a man enjoy a state of crippledom more. His arm was still in a

sling when he stood before the altar of Abbotstord Church with Kitty Bourton, and they vowed to love and cherish each other till death should them part.

"Ah! my darling," whispered Kitty, as they drove away, "you won the Liverpool, and I am proud of it, but nobody knows what I suffered during the three days previous to that race. I was haunted with the idea, Dick, that it was predestined to prove fatal to you. But you're my very own now, and I'll never consent to your riding another steeple-chase."



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